DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 413 311 SP 037 616

AUTHOR	Zetler, Alan; Spuhler, Lee
TITLE	The Single Best Thing: Mentoring Beginning Teachers. A Manual for Program Designers and Participants.
INSTITUTION	Montana State Board of Education, Helena
PUB DATE	1997-07-00
NOTE	90p.; Prepared for the Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council.
AVAILABLE FROM	Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, 2500 Broadway, Helena, MT 59620; phone: 406-444-6576.
PUB TYPE	Guides - Non-Classroom (055)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Beginning Teacher Induction; *Beginning Teachers; Elementary Secondary Education; Helping Relationship; Interpersonal Relationship; *Mentors; *Program Administration; Program Development; *Teacher Role; Teaching Experience
IDENTIFIERS	*Protege Mentor Relationship

ABSTRACT

This self-help manual provides information to districts and schools wishing to investigate or implement a beginning teacher mentoring support program. The manual describes one model of mentoring, the Beginning Teacher Support Program, that was researched in Montana schools from 1992-1995. Chapter 1 introduces the purpose and organization of the manual. Chapter 2 discusses essential components of mentoring, such as staff/community involvement, board approval, administrative support, and program evaluation. Chapter 3 highlights administrator issues, including staff/community involvement, school board validation, program administration, new teacher involvement, ongoing responsibilities, and program evaluation. Chapter 4 explains the mentor's role, discussing how mentors are selected, length of their involvement, incentives to participate, communication skills, mentor qualities, reflective questioning, and mentor-mentee interaction. Chapter 5 discusses the beginning teacher mentee, noting the benefits of context knowledge, other mentoring benefits, and the formalized mentor-mentee relationship. The seven appendixes offer: (1) references; (2) a list of available handbooks, guides, and reports; (3) sample administrative letters; (4) questions to facilitate reflective thinking; (5) a checklist for starting the school year; (6) a list of participants in the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program; and (7) address list for the program Steering Committee. (SM)

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THE SINGLE BEST THING

Mentoring Beginning Teachers

A Manual for Program Designers and Participants

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"Mentoring is the single best thing we can do for a beginning teacher."

Jim McCrossin
High School Principal
Whitehall, Montana

July 1997

FOREWARD

The Single Best Thing was developed as a self-help manual for districts and schools wishing to investigate or implement a beginning teacher mentoring support program. The manual describes one model of mentoring that was researched in thirty-five Montana schools from the period 1992-95 under the title "Beginning Teacher Support Program."

The Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) of the State Board of Public Education has ownership of the research data and the manual. Publication and distribution of The Single Best Thing is a function of CSPAC. (See address below.)

The manual authors: Dr. Alan Zetler and Dr. Lee Spuhler conducted the original mentorship research and developed the manual under contract to CSPAC. Both authors are Emeriti Professors and Deans at Western Montana College of The University of Montana located in Dillon, Montana.

The authors wish to give credit to past and present members of the Board of Public Education, Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, and Montana's professional education associations for their assistance and support in completing this project.

Assistance and consultation about mentoring: Under continuing obligation to CSPAC for the period 1997-99, the manual authors are available for consultation. During the two-year period, the authors are available to make a total of four presentations without stipend to school districts and/or professional organizations. CSPAC will consider the stipend-free requests and the authors may contract for additional presentations. In addition, the authors will be available for telephone consultation for the two-year period, again at no cost to the callers. The contacts for the manual copies and consultation services are as follows:

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Desktop Published by Sally Munday
Western Montana College of The University of Montana

This document was printed with state dollars from the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council's research fund. Any reproduction or citation must credit the Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council and the Board of Public Education. Resale of this publication is strictly prohibited.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

Chapter One is devoted to the concept of mentoring beginning teachers and how The Single Best Thing can help schools organize and implement a program.

What is mentoring? Mentoring is a formal helping relationship by which an experienced educator assists a beginning teacher achieve professional success. A fundamental tenet of teacher mentoring is the belief that the single best way of developing and retaining entry level teachers is to utilize the assistance of an established master teacher during the first year of the beginner's induction. **The research showed the overwhelmingly positive effect that mentoring can have in easing the transition from college to teaching, in starting the development of a competent professional, and in helping novices cope with the onslaught of new pressures.**

From Where Did the Manual Originate?

In 1992 the Montana Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council (CSPAC) of the State Board of Public Education embarked on a three year research project called the "Beginning Teacher Support Program." The type of support given to beginning teachers was to pair each of them one-on-one in a formalized relationship with a veteran teacher in the school district. The research examined two facets of mentoring. The first looked at the effect of mentoring on a new teacher's development as measured by performance and attitude during the initial year of teaching. The second examined context conditions that exist in a school/community and assessed the impact of those factors on the beginner.

The research study included newly contracted graduates from all eight Montana teacher preparation schools. A balance was achieved with variables such as elementary/secondary, American Indian/white, school size from AA (athletic classification) through multigrade rural, and subject area assignments. One hundred five teachers and administrators from thirty-five schools geographically representing all regions of Montana participated in the three-year effort.

Following up on the study, CSPAC contracted the two researchers during 1996-97 to develop a manual based on findings. Information in the manual can be found in the original study reports which are available from CSPAC. If replicated, specific findings and procedures have additional support from the professional literature (see Appendices A and B).

The Basic Definitions

The professional literature applies numerous definitions and labels to mentoring. This manual uses several common mentoring terms and their synonyms throughout which are defined as follows:

Mentor: An experienced teacher who formally agrees to lend assistance to a beginning teacher and enters into a helping relationship. Mentors are also referred to as veterans, counselors, coaches, master teachers or peer teachers, even though the strict definitions of each do differ according to some writers.

Mentee: A teacher serving his/her first year in the profession under contract to a district and who is being assisted by a mentor. Mentees typically are fresh from pre-service preparation and have no experience. Some districts may choose to classify teachers new to the district or school as mentee possibilities. Other terms used are beginning teacher, new teacher, novice or protégé.

Administrator: The building principal or district level official who is responsible for supervising the mentor and mentee, other staff, facility, and instructional program in a particular school. A key function of the administrator is staff evaluation. Larger school systems may also utilize another administrator above the building level to coordinate a district mentoring program.

Induction: The total district effort aimed at new teachers which is designed to bring them up to full professional status. This effort is often a combination of short and long range in-service goals plus an individual development plan for the new teacher. Mentoring is but one possible aspect of induction.

School culture: The unique environment created by the sum of a school's history and experiences. Drawn from the field of cultural anthropology, the term implies a school with its own special set of formal and informal operating rules, people and conditions that keep the enterprise running. The terms "the system" or "the establishment" are loosely used as synonyms.

Context or structural conditions: Those characteristics of a school culture that impact a mentee's sense of well being and therefore demand attention during mentoring.

What Is the Purpose of the Manual?

The purpose of mentoring is to assist the beginner on site during the first year in a specific school environment via the single best method available. Mentoring is one process within broader induction procedures, the collective intent of which is to facilitate the pace and quality of the new teacher's development into a competent practicing professional.

The Single Best Thing was created to help schools establish and implement a mentoring program as a separate assistance program or to supplement existing teacher induction efforts. The manual was written for the purposes of (a) informing key school personnel about the potential of beginning teacher support via mentoring, and (b) providing guidance for administrators, mentors, and mentees should such a program be initiated. Written in general terms for program designers and in specific terms for participants, the manual can be adapted to differences in school size, administrative arrangements, community cultures, and to a host of other factors that make schools differ one from another.

When compared to other existing manuals (Appendix B), The Single Best Thing is more comprehensive, particularly in program design. The reason for the greater detail has to do with the manual's anticipated use. It is a self-help publication for school districts and mentoring participants. While other mentoring program aids (workshops, consultants, financial grants) may be an option for some districts, the manual was written for schools that want to try mentoring on their own with only the manual as guidance. Some of the suggested procedures are already common practice with district experimental programs. The authors have chosen to err on the side of a detailed scenario, the parts of which surfaced at one time or another during their administration of the three-year mentorship research.

The Single Best Thing is narrow in its intent, concentrating on the relationship between a beginning teacher and his/her experienced mentor and what that one-on-one pairing can accomplish. The relationship is fostered and formalized by the district and school administrator. The authors feel that 75% of the potential benefit from mentoring arises from the interaction between mentor and mentee. Just the fact that the two of them are together accomplishes most of the good. The other 25% is dependent on cooperative school arrangements in which participants from local or regional mentorship programs are brought together to share experiences. References that allude to such meetings and what they are able to accomplish will be found in the manual.

What the Manual Doesn't Do

The narrow focus of supporting the beginning teacher as explained in this manual does not imply other agendas sometimes associated with mentoring. Currently no Montana state mandate through certification, accreditation, or statute requires mentoring of new teachers. Efforts are voluntary at the district level up to this point in time and the manual recognizes that fact. Neither is there any educational reform movement underway of which mentoring is an integral part, as was the case in the California experiment (Wagner, 1990). Nor does this manual attempt to introduce mentoring at the expense of existing school induction efforts, for example those practiced in Great Falls, Miles City, and Columbia Falls. In those communities, mentoring as practiced in the CSPAC project was more comprehensive and personal in its scope, not replacing, but rather supplementing, ongoing school programs.

The Single Best Thing is not a comprehensive training manual for mentors. It assumes the spontaneous interaction between two people will create most of the benefit. It does not, therefore, attempt to detail one or several models of adult learning, psychology, or instructional supervision usually offered as formal mentorship training. There is an orientation to what may be expected within new teachers and the role of mentors as defined by the research, but this is not construed to be in the same league as formal mentor training which typically takes 3-4 days.

Collegiate teacher preparation programs are encouraged by their accrediting agencies to follow up their first-year graduates, not only to survey beginning teachers but to ideally work with districts on continued professional development for the beginner. This responsibility is sometimes narrowly interpreted as providing assistance for the institution's graduates should they encounter trouble. But teacher education programs are hard pressed to offer this service in a way that is meaningful to the beginning teacher. The reason is partly budgetary, but also because they are not based on site as is the novice graduate. **Mentoring as proposed in this manual is a school district organized and implemented operation, not an extension of college programs.** The potential for college follow-up is there, but is not a reality at present.

How Is the Manual Organized?

How can it be made to work? The manual is divided into five working chapters plus an appendix. The first two chapters contain general mentorship information for decision makers and potential participants. Chapter 1 orients readers to the mentoring concept as experienced in the Montana three-year study and to the philosophy behind The Single Best Thing. Chapter 2 is a suggested scenario that follows program organization and implementation for one year. The general findings of the research first appear within this chapter. But generalizations are just that, so specifics and exceptions to the norm are critical because mentoring must be tailored to each school's situation. Chapters 3, 4 and 5 are written specifically for building administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers, respectively. Each of these three participants will find the pertinent general patterns and statements of Chapter 2 expanded into detail as it may affect them individually. Any of the three persons could gain perspective by reading material intended for the other two; no secrets are intended.

Another format feature of the manual is the separation of text in the chapters following to the inside of pages with comments and blank space on the outside. This design permits the text to be embellished with actual comments and experiences drawn from the 105 Montana educators who participated in CSPAC's Beginning Teacher Support Program or that were taken from professional mentoring literature. Blank space allows room for school personnel to write notes to themselves or for others that identify unique characteristics important to mentoring as it is applied to "our school."

Writing and Comment Space

An advisory group of eight participants from the research study helped the authors design this manual. Another nine participants from three districts read the drafts and offered comment. All names appear in Appendix G. Everyone stressed the need for flexibility in the application of mentoring because of the uniqueness of schools. The authors found that when generalizations were attempted across schools, something always turned up to show why the norm did not apply to some situations. Therefore, at the end of some topics within the manual text will be found a paragraph titled

> ✱"**BUT NOT ALWAYS**." *These exceptions to the general statements are intended to be a constant reminder to manual users that the unique characteristics of their school will necessitate local modifications of described practices.*

The Guiding Premises

Mentoring as studied in the Beginning Teacher Support Program research does not claim to be the only type of new teacher assistance. Nor does it pretend to be the best for all situations. However, as judged by the participants, mentoring as defined within the study appears to be the single best experimental assistance a district could have readily available for its new teachers, hence, the title of the manual. As this particular model of mentoring was designed and implemented, several guiding premises were followed that led to positive impacts 90% of the time. For a school to adopt - and adapt - the suggestions in this manual and to have the best chance for success, these three minimal guidelines must be followed. Otherwise, the ground rules of mentoring will have been changed and the lessons from the research experience may not be valid.

❶ **Mentors do not evaluate their mentees.** That is the job of the school administrator. The secret to a good mentor-mentee relationship is mutual trust and confidentiality. New teachers will try to hide weaknesses from administrators. If beginners ever feel their revelations confided to a mentor are becoming part of the district summative evaluations, the show is over, folks!

❷ **Mentoring as described in The Single Best Thing is a one-on-one proposition.** The beginning teacher's first contract calls for a full load of responsibility the same as that of a veteran teacher. The mentor likewise has a full-time load and has instant credibility with the beginner because of that fact. Full-time teaching is hard enough by itself, let alone with the added burden of seeking and giving assistance on an instantaneous and long term basis. One beginner with one veteran teacher for one school year seems to be the best practical arrangement, given the daily responsibilities of most professionals.

❸ **Mentors are not trained for the responsibility. Oriented, yes; trained, no.** This statement is contrary to what the literature on mentoring suggests. If a school district has the resources to provide mentor training, that certainly would be an advantage. Even this third premise would not argue were mentor training available. But the pragmatic circumstances are (a) the state does not currently have the resources or mandate to provide training for school districts, (b) few districts, if any, are in a position to train mentors themselves because, at this time, mentoring beginning teachers may be only an occasional enterprise (we hope it would grow) and, (c) the Montana study showed that nine times out of ten, using untrained mentors selected by the school administration resulted in very positive outcomes. **What this third premise says is that schools usually already have on staff a teacher or teachers with sufficient talent to act as mentors.**

What About the Future?

Mentoring and Induction Programs

Acceptance of mentoring by school districts could become a step in district professional development. It also could be part of the district induction program and a factor in staff retention. The Beginning Teacher Support Program study found some intriguing data on retention of first year teachers. Using a control group of non-mentored beginning teachers, the research found that 91% of mentored teachers stayed in the profession after three years, while 73% of non-mentored teachers were still under teaching contract. Almost all of the dropout occurred during the first year. Admittedly, the sample numbers are small and a longer term study is needed to validate the tendency. But if retention is an issue, mentoring is an idea worthy of district consideration.

Presently, over half of the states have tried some form of mentoring as a step within teacher induction or as a separate concept (Donovan, 1992). Provisional certification including mentoring is a device that could be used by states to insure support for all beginning teachers. If that happens, and if the mentoring programs use premises and designs similar to those of the original Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program, then this manual has additional potential for wider application.

The names and district affiliations of the Montana mentoring study individuals are listed in Appendix F by the year of their participation.

Chapter Two

ESSENTIAL COMPONENTS

Chapter Two is devoted to the general considerations necessary when developing and implementing a mentorship program. The eleven components described are the core of the manual and are the building blocks of a mentoring program. The number of components is arbitrary, so some may be eliminated, combined, or need not even be considered by some districts. Others may be added.

A philosophy lies behind the content of this chapter. As long as mentoring is going well and there are no problems, some of the program components suggested might not need to be considered. However, if questions do arise, districts would be prepared to respond if policies and procedures were already in place. Districts will have to weigh the amount of organization work against the possibility of problems when deciding what components of this chapter they should pursue.

— Component No. 1 —

Issues That Become Priorities for New Teachers

If You Don't Read Anything Else, Read This!!

If mentoring is reduced to its fundamental one cause that drives the organization of a mentoring program, it would be as follows:

The environment of the first year of teaching creates an emotional mind game in beginners, played not with others, but within themselves. Whether or not a new teacher successfully copes with the job may be judged by others, but that critical determination takes place in the beginner's own mind. The decision is based on a self-assessment of how well he/she is contending with those issues most important to the individual, not someone else's definition of what is significant.

What are the priorities that mentors help address? The purpose of this component topic is to make participants aware of what specific help beginners are likely to seek and mentoring programs will be asked to deliver. Fortunately, the research showed a pattern of prioritized issues across beginning teachers, but each with a local context twist.

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The Importance of School Context Conditions on the Beginning Teacher

Our elementary and secondary staff are two different groups. Teachers who had cross-over assignments had problems satisfying both sides of that equation.
Superintendent

As a school evolves within a community, it takes on a unique culture of its own. In order to operate, it fashions formal and informal rules of conduct to manage its affairs. Formal rules are state school mandates, district policies, building regulations, curriculum, schedule, and other procedures that are deliberated and formally adopted into practice. Informal rules are behavior expectations that arise as people of the past and present interact in the community and school workplace. The mores and folkways of larger societies are formed in this manner. These rules are not written, but there is social scorn if they are violated. As a group of people function within the two sets of rules, they individually and collectively add a unique chemistry that will not be found anywhere else. The middle school faculty of a certain school, the third graders, the helpful custodian -- these are examples of people adding their own uniqueness to a school. **This cultural mix of rules, practices and people becomes the school context.** Working conditions and expectations that are unique to this school characterize the context. The terms "context conditions" or "structural conditions" refer to the various parts of the unique school environment.

Some teachers bring a better personal/background package to the job than do others.
Administrator

The recently hired beginning teacher introduces a new structural condition to the existing context: a package composed of his/her individual background, spirit, personality, life style, and career aspirations. The personal package and the existing structure must accommodate each other over time. For the beginner, a rational, well-timed transition would be beneficial. But unfortunately, as the mentoring research revealed, **the first-year accommodation is an emotional whirlwind for the newcomer,** consuming great amounts of thought and energy -- energy diverted from children and learning. Instead, new teachers' first priorities address their own self concerns as they try to fit into the system. This does not mean that beginners ignore the everyday responsibilities of teaching or are not doing a good job in the classroom. It means their first purpose in trying to make teaching work better is to ease the burdens on themselves, not to make learning better for children. Pupil gains may simultaneously occur, but that purpose is overshadowed for awhile.

The mind of the new teacher may construct context conditions that veteran school staff members or administrators do not recognize as even existing. **Mentors need to allow beginners opportunity to talk about anything around the school and not be judgmental about what is a significant issue.** Some issues would exist in no other school or be of no concern to anyone but the individual mentee.

What are the prioritized context conditions that beginners first need to know about, defined not by someone else or by the system, but by themselves? What do new teachers most worry about? What kinds of issues are consuming so much of their thoughts? The usual school-wide orientation sessions designed for new staff or the general faculty fall short. Generalized "if the shoe fits, wear it" information is often not related at this time to what the novice really wants to know. Mentors, on the other hand, are in position to respond to the specific concerns of new teachers. They become, in medical terms, the "first responders" for the mentee. The assistance they give is not generalized, but instead personalized for the individualized needs of one beginning teacher.

The Montana study found issues which become priorities for beginning teachers. Through a year-long process of interviews, journal entries and researcher observations, new teachers and their mentors revealed the specific content of (a) the conversations that took place between mentor and mentee, (b) topics that were discussed by mentors and mentees with the researchers on-site during monthly interviews, and (c) mentee private concerns, thoughts and reactions to their first year experiences, recorded in sequence by journal entries.

The results were largely independent of school size, geography, teaching level, major/minors, gender, age, college preparation program and other variables. The higher priorities of new teachers during the first year as revealed by the Montana study appear to be almost universal. The collective thoughts from the three sources are ranked in order of their importance--the more times an issue was brought up by the greatest number of teachers, the higher the rank. The top twelve are listed and briefly annotated as follows:

❶ **Priority:** *Personal Impact of the New Environment on the Beginning Teacher*

"What in the world is happening to me?" All aspects of the new teacher's life are being affected by this new job -- affected in ways not planned. Emotions take over. Teaching has to be redefined from the heart instead of from the head. School conditions and events are taken personally. Professional decisions made by the new teacher are second-guessed by themselves. Anxiety rises to high levels as novices begin to doubt their own competence. Most of what they feel is unwarranted, but right now, new teachers are their own worst enemies.

Stress and fatigue are normal in teaching.
Mentee

New teachers, like ducklings, are cool and calm on the surface, but paddling like mad underneath.
Superintendent

❷ **Priority:** *Discipline*

When pupils misbehave or don't do what they are told, the **beginner looks at discipline not as a pupil problem but as their own problem,** i.e., a function of incompetence. Problems with student behavior "will lead to my not being rehired next year!" This self-concern results from the sudden responsibility of looking at children from the teacher's side of the desk instead of from the pupil side. This school condition concern is consistent with what other studies have revealed (Veenman, 1984).

❸ **Priority:** *Faculty/Staff Relations*

New teachers desperately want to be accepted and they worry about how other teachers and the non-certified staff feel about them. The beginner's professional decisions may be altered because of his/her perception of how it may be received by the rest of the faculty. Beginners have not yet learned how to balance the professional and personal sides of teaching, separating them when necessary. Personal reactions are thus a strong force. The closer the beginner works with peers and staff, the greater the potential worry until such a time that the newcomer feels confident about his/her own professional judgments.

My mentor was the interpreter of lounge/faculty/staff attitudes - gave me the inside edge.
Mentee

Personalities in our school act in certain ways.
Principal

❹ **Priority:** *Extra Curricular Assignments*

Extra-curricular assignment was the problem for the mentee, not the teaching assignment.
Principal

If the new teacher in a Class C high school on the Montana Highline is given the head basketball coaching job, there is no argument about what will consume his or her thoughts. Most high visibility, high expectation extra-curricular assignments will do the same. **There is a sudden assumption of responsibility for which there was little if any preparation.** Any responsibility of a non-classroom nature can cause anxiety because the causes and effects are right out there for everyone to see. "Bad enough to worry about the rest of the staff, now I have to worry about the whole town!"

❺ Priority: *Mentees' Perceptions of Their Own Professional Growth*

❻ Priority: *Professionalism*

These two issues are addressed together because they are related. **The concern is a matter of feedback, or the lack of it.** What information is available to the new teachers to tell them whether or not they are doing well? Frequent classroom visitations with follow-up by administrators are not the norm early in the year. Formative district evaluations come too late to calm early anxiety. The classroom is an isolated place without other adults present to give the beginner professional feedback. To fill in the void, new teachers pick up whatever clues they can: from their students, remarks heard in the hall or teacher's lounge, and from their own assessment (which is poorly developed anyway) of their own performance compared to the veteran teachers. The clues usually end up as a negative message to the novice, not because they actually are, but because the beginner's mind manufactures them to be so.

The mentor gave me reassurance that I was doing the right thing relative to my style.
Mentee

❼ Priority: *Mentor Empowerment and Support*

Positive thoughts! **Mentees begin to realize what role mentors play in minimizing their concerns.** They begin to see that, with help, it is possible to live with the many context conditions that exist in the school. Mentors use their own leverage and credibility to insure that needed information is not denied and that the system does not take advantage of the newcomer.

It's OK not to do it all!
Mentor

Since most mentee priorities are worrisome -- **worries they do not want to reveal to others, especially the administrator** -- they appreciate the opportunity to talk them over with a confidant in a non-threatening relationship.

❽ Priority: *Curriculum and Instruction*

Finally, what and how to teach! At first, mentees seek help on small aspects of classroom teaching. "Help me get through the next five minutes!" As they gain confidence, *Our mentored teacher gained 2-3 years in curriculum growth.*

Principal

beginners want to know about the bigger school picture and how their classroom content fits in. ***The fact that this priority is in eighth place is significant and sobering when one considers the seven issues above it and how much of a new teacher's thinking is first consumed by those school conditions.***

With mentoring, there were less problems with behavior, policy, and parental issues.

Principal

❾ Priority: ***Parent Relations and Conferences***

Put this concern into the same category as extra-curricular assignments with respect to training and confidence. When beginners learn to stop second guessing their own decisions about children and instruction, their fear about parent reactions will ease. But for now, **new teachers do not know what to say to parents or how to say it.** Part of the fear in smaller districts is the potential social impact.

The message: Don't leave mentor-mentee communication to chance.

❿ Priority: ***Formal Communication with Mentor and Released Time***

This issue expresses appreciation for the time that mentors devote to their mentees and that schools provide for communication. But conversely, when communication opportunity is minimal or suffers because of a strained mentor-mentee relationship, it becomes a serious concern. The message sent to administrators and program planners by this context condition is not to leave the pair's communication to chance. It needs structure and monitoring.

What is available and workable for this school?

⓫ Priority: ***Instructional Methods and Materials***

This issue sounds much like a section of the lesson plans the beginner had to prepare the year before while student teaching. In fact, the purpose now is the same but with a context twist. What class teaching materials can be found around this school? What ideas can you suggest for teaching this lesson to this group of youngsters? Most of the assistance sought from mentors on this issue is short range and immediate. Mentors can lend valuable help by advising mentees if their plans might lead to controversy.

Students are different today!

⓬ Priority: ***Pupil Values***

Value shifts can occur rapidly in contemporary society and the new teacher's pupils reflect those changes. Beginners find pupils' responses to teaching, learning, and authority to be **different from what they imagined**. They wonder at the attitudes some students have toward school and learning.

The antics and apathy of reluctant learners are taken personally and are a blow to their ideals and confidence.

> ✍ The above twelve context conditions are those attracting the most comments and with the most consistency. The mentorship research study report lists the other lesser conditions as well as those of low priority. A school may have special conditions of great interest to new teachers in that situation, but of little interest elsewhere. For example, school consolidation and district governance are not of interest to a beginner unless his/her school is threatened or faced with severe change.

Component No. 2
Staff/Community Involvement

Keep the process voluntary. Some districts/schools may not be good candidates.
Administrator

Mentees and mentors are both members of the certified staff. The bulk of the mentoring relationship is certainly a function of those two. But to be successful, other **school and community persons who are the significant players in the professional lives of both teachers need to buy into the concept of mentoring** that will now take place in their midst. After all, these two participants were selected from their ranks. From their pool of time and resources mentoring will draw its energy. If mentoring becomes a staff or community idea rather than a top-down mandate, resistance will be minimized.

If the district is small and rural, chances are the school board will be involved right from the start. In larger systems, building level teachers and administrators will be most directly impacted and therefore may initiate discussions, understanding that district administrators and board will later become involved.

A committee of professionals and community members (through the board or directly) should meet during the year preceding implementation and decide at least three considerations. First, what will be the district's rational for mentoring? Second, what goals are appropriate for the first year of operation? Third, what will be the scope of the mentoring operation?

Component No. 3

District Rationale and Goals for Mentoring

Why start mentoring?

What and who benefits from mentoring? The very nature of the practice dictates that **the beginning teacher is the focus** and therefore stands to gain the most. The novice was hired as a professional and thus professional growth is paramount. But what is meant by professional growth? Is it limited to instructional competency? The win-loss record of the new coach? The district must decide if hard measures of new teacher performance exist and are appropriate. Can benefits to students under the mentored beginner be measured and compared to some standard? Perhaps the affective side of the new teacher is most important: the attitudes, feelings, and sense of well-being experienced not only by the novice, but by the pupils, administration, and community. The selection of participants, evaluation of the program, and the decision to continue beyond the experimental stage depend on whether or not the district's mentoring goals have been accomplished. Human and material resources have been diverted or added to carry out the program. Was it worth it?

The mentor eased my mind about professional situations.
Mentee

Another benefit is the potential that mentoring holds as the **mechanism to start professional development**. A real danger exists that new teachers can slip into a survival mode by discovering a few things that work early on and thereafter utilize only those same ideas at the expense of other innovations. Mentors can assist the process of self-reflection and growth. A trusted mentor becomes the avenue for help when needed and the source of information and encouragement. The novice's sense of worth gets a positive jump start. To realize that the problems, questions, and concerns on their mind are being, or have been, shared by other teachers is a great revelation. The source of that message is the mentor. New teachers who feel good about themselves will probably weather first-year pressures.

Our beginner would have quit by Christmas without mentor's encouragement.
Principal

Mentoring is a cheap investment to retain teachers.
Principal

The second principal beneficiary is the school district. Many mentoring programs have been started for the **purpose of retaining teachers**. National statistics on teacher dropout from the profession are alarming. Given any group of newly contracted teachers, figures of 10% to 12% dropout per year are typical (Morey, 1990) with half of the group no longer in teaching after five years.

A third benefit is **instructional quality and consistency for students**. As will be seen in a later topic, the first year of teaching is not an exercise in rational instruction and curriculum, but an emotional, self-centered period of adjustment in which part of the energy normally devoted to program purposes and pupils has to wait until the beginner makes the transition to true educational concerns. Mentors can speed up the pace and quality of adjustment for the mentee.

When problems arose, I did not have to proceed blindly.
Mentee

The building administrator stands to gain from a mentored beginning teacher. A novice needs to know much, and the beginner that feels comfortable asking a principal a myriad of questions is rare. Asking questions is often interpreted as a sign of weakness by new teachers. A school's cultural elements and operating procedures are known by existing staff, but for the beginner this is not the case, even though it is often assumed they do know. A mentor becomes the approachable intermediary who fields hundreds of small questions, saving the administrator time and giving the new teacher a personalized answer. Some administrators may have little chance to catch a beginner's problems because of time spent on other duties or putting out brush fires. District or building orientation sessions conducted by the administration are of some help, but are generalized and often overwhelming. The first days on the job are a time of information overload. Mentors can parcel out needed help in more digestible amounts.

The mentor's help replaced some of what I might normally have done.
Principal

Mentors themselves usually feel a great sense of accomplishment and renewal because of their efforts. Veteran teachers with full-time classroom responsibilities are limited in advancement opportunities and recognition unless they move vertically into administration. The opportunity to make a major impact on the profession via mentoring is viewed as a significant act with visible consequences. Mentors tend to re-examine their own practices, freshened by interaction with a new professional full of untested ideals. They are normally very positive individuals, who at the end of the year realize the professional development they themselves have undergone.

I was made more aware of my own strengths and weaknesses.
Mentor

But mentoring could have negative consequences for a school district. Will special attention to a new teacher

No problems arose, but this was dumb luck.
Principal

create hard feelings? After all, did we not all go through the school of hard knocks without help? Are good mentors available? Master teachers chosen for the job are apt to be some of the best and busiest persons on the faculty. Can more be asked of them? Can more be asked of them without some kind of tangible reward? Is the district in a position to create meaningful rewards? Will the collective bargaining agreement tolerate rewards or specific dispensations to one or several individuals and not to others?

Can mentoring be made a logical part of the district's induction and professional development processes or should it be attempted strictly on its own merits? Finally, is mentoring first-year teachers really the best use of the concept? One district superintendent suggested that mentoring second-year teachers might accomplish more because matters like curriculum and pupil learning, not self-centered concerns, are apt to be on the teacher's mind.

Component No. 4

Scope of the Operation

Some new teachers?

All new teachers?

One school?

All schools?

The district rationale for mentoring must be accompanied by discussion about how extensive the operation might become. One issue is whether mentoring should be district-wide, involve a single building, or be based on the needs of individual new teachers. At the individual level, some beginners whose positions may put them more at risk and may logical candidates for mentoring. When asked about most needy mentees, administrators in the Montana study were not in agreement. Their various opinions covered teaching positions in just about every conceivable level, specialty and locale.

New Teacher's Success: 70% depended on mentor this year; 30% next year; 0% third year.
Principal

A second issue is how long mentoring should continue. Although one year is the basis for this manual, other options have been suggested. The first half year or only the first few months have been suggested should mentoring services have to be rationed. On the other side, continuing mentoring through the second year of teaching was suggested, with the assumption that assistance would start on a personal level and evolve into instructional and curricular help later on.

A third issue in deciding scope is an examination of the context factors existing in districts or schools. They are a unique dynamic peculiar to each school and become part of the school culture. These factors are very important considerations in mentoring because (1) new procedures will have to be created as mentoring is dovetailed into existing structures, and (2) evidence suggests that a school's contextual conditions when applied to teachers are most responsible for their leaving the profession (Morey, 1990). There may be some parts of the establishment with which the teacher cannot cope. A school's personnel and operational practices must accommodate a nurturing climate if mentoring is to succeed.

At some point, mentoring will impact the status quo of a school, i.e., its structure and its people. What elements are among those that need to be addressed before including a school and its personnel within the mentoring operation? The following four selected elements are not an exhaustive list, but will assist districts in determining the viability of a mentoring operation in a particular school:

- **Time for mentor-mentee conversation:** A mutual released time within the school schedule when the two participants can talk undisturbed works best. One period of released time per week worked well for one school in the study. As alternatives, same-hour preparation periods, team teaching or coaching assignments, time alone before and/or after school (again undisturbed), and regular travel together as a pair seem to facilitate the need for communication. Physical proximity of the two teachers greatly assists conversation.

- **Reward and recognition for mentors:** Mentoring is demanding of time and energy. To formally assign such duty to a veteran teacher without some reward might create potential problems with all but the most altruistic individuals. Experienced mentors say that the assumption of a formalized arrangement with some form of prearranged recognition creates a sense of responsibility and commitment. What is adequate reward? One is monetary. The research project paid mentors $1,000 for the year's work. In addition, school districts received $1,000 (1) to defray expenses, for

No doubt that existence of program structure and rewards affects priorities of mentors.

Superintendent

example when participants were asked to be away from the school to attend research meetings, and (2) to insure that districts completed a full year's commitment to the research project. Other alternatives or additions to stipends suggested by study participants were paid travel to a state or national convention, inservice credits by the district toward professional advancement, college summer school credits, release from special duties such as playground supervision, and regular released time during the school day or week.

- **Timing of the mentor-mentee pairing:** Two options have been suggested - pair the two before school starts or wait a number of weeks after starting and then make the pairing. Of the two, the first has the most support because the assistance comes at a time when most needed. The second sacrifices early help, but may avoid a mismatch because pairing waits for natural affinities to develop before becoming formalized.

- **Disengagement options:** If the mentor-mentee pairing runs into trouble, changes may be in order. Personality differences or lack of understanding of roles can lead to difficulty. Districts will have to decide whether to terminate mentoring altogether for the two participants or to select another mentor. Hard feelings may ensue, particularly if the reward system has been started. Who decides if mentoring is not working? Administrator? Mentor? A new teacher might not want to make waves if a mistake were made.

Two observations from the Montana project offer some guidance for disengagement. It was noted that even with an assigned mentor, new teachers often develop a professional relationship with another faculty member - almost like a second mentor. If the nature of that relationship accomplishes professional purposes, this might be the preferred method.

Also, keep in mind that the purpose of mentoring is to assist the professional development of the beginner. If disengagement is being considered, one must assess if that professional goal is being met even if personal friendships, social compatibility and other side effects usually serendipitous to a mentoring relationship have not blossomed between the two. If there are other avenues to help the new teacher accomplish these lesser purposes, it might be well to maintain the pairing. One administrator in the study chose a mentor who would cultivate the newcomer's professional side, but was not a social person, knowing that the rest of the school staff would take care of those needs.

We learned to understand each other after a rough start.

Mentee

Component No. 5

Selection of Responsible Person(s) to Administer the Program

Up to this point, the described components were basically rationale and policy issues. Now the emphasis shifts to administration.

The size of the district will determine how many administrators may be involved. For discussion purposes, the school board is not regarded as administration, although some small districts may have a hazy line separating board actions from that function.

Above the building level, districts normally employ someone who acts as personnel or human resources officer. This is typically the superintendent, assistant superintendent, or other district official who deals with certified staff. Mentoring activity usually starts with this individual since he/she has current responsibility that is related to the personnel decisions common to mentorship programs -- related because mentoring needs to be within the realm of staffing decisions. This person is in a position to move up or down the chain of command and thus facilitate the involvement of necessary persons or agents.

District Policies

↓

District Level Administrator

↓

Building Level Administrator

Once district level matters have been addressed and potential mentee(s) positions have been selected, the building principal becomes the key administrator. The principal has responsibility and authority over the new teacher in the building and over the veteran faculty, one of whom will become the mentor.

To leave the responsibility to the building principal, but to delegate the authority to another administrator is to invite trouble. This is particularly vital in the selection of the mentor, but might be circumvented if the principal is new. Both mentors and mentees must operate within the

A better match would have helped our mentoring situation. Channels were not followed in matching the two.

Principal

parameters of a school staff and the principal must be able to exercise administrative control over both.

> ***BUT NOT ALWAYS!*** *Administering mentorships in small independent elementary districts may involve the County Superintendent of Schools, the schools' supervising teacher and the school board. Because of few administrative layers responsibility directly falls on them. Larger districts may have strong department head organization at the district or school levels that may assume administrative functions.*

Component No. 6
Board Approval

Sooner or later, mentoring will need validation by the district school board. Mentoring, policy recommendations, and implementation procedures need official sanction as does any other innovation. Budget implications may be inherent in the mentor reward system. One budget consideration suggested by the manual authors is that any financial stipends be independent of the district salary, as mentoring could be a one-time occurrence. This was an agreement stipulated for district participation in the Beginning Teacher Support research study, and such separation worked well.

Among other board considerations are the process by which mentoring will be evaluated, the future of the program beyond experimentation, and implications for staff development. Finally, local program administrators or supervising teachers will need to schedule periodic reports to the board.

Component No. 7
Selection of Mentee Candidates

If district decisions about the scope of mentoring has decreed that any and all beginning teachers will be mentored, selection of candidates may be moot. But if choice is necessary, some lessons drawn from the Montana study may be helpful.

To begin with, **the choosing of mentees is an administrative function,** following whatever guidelines the district committee may have drafted in its earlier deliberations. Someone from the administrative team, usually a building principal, probably has the best knowledge of the new teacher. Interviews will be conducted, during which impressions of the candidate will be formed. Based on those impressions, an administrator has to decide if the new teacher has the package of qualities suitable to be a mentee. What qualities are essential?

The new teacher would have succeeded anyway, without mentoring.
Principal

Mentoring is an interpersonal relationship, usually very deeply involved. That is the source of the pair's mutual trust and willingness to communicate. Some new teachers may not be receptive to such involvement. Mentoring might still work with this individual, however, providing there is a willingness to accept help at a more professional level. District personnel might choose to raise the issue of help and mentoring with the candidate during the interview. After hiring, the district may wish to initiate mentoring via a form on which new teachers request assistance. The implication in this procedure is that mentoring is first defined for beginners so they can make informed decisions. Some candidates may come from cultural backgrounds that frown on seeking or accepting help. Traditions or personalities may cause some persons to closely guard their feelings and stay aloof from others. A few new teachers may be simply too stubborn or hard-headed to make good mentees.

It would have helped to have known more about the new teacher, but that's not easy with 57 employees in the building.
Principal

Even after mentoring, the new teacher may still have to learn the hard way.
Principal

Another factor in mentee selection is to ask the question, **"What new teacher(s) most need the assistance?"** As previously stated, there is no consensus on the answer. But one approach is to assess which beginners have been hired into positions of high risk or have low natural support mechanisms within the school(s). Everyone has definitions of high risk and low support, but here are some examples:

- *K-12 teachers working with secondary and elementary staffs who differ philosophically.*
- *Itinerant teachers with multiple building assignments such that the teacher never seems to belong to any one school's faculty.*

Elementary teachers need the most help.
Principal

- *A classroom that contains high numbers of special needs students.*
- *A department within a school that has internal turmoil and division that tugs at the beginner from several directions.*
- *A highly visible coaching assignment in a community with great expectations.*
- *A beginner who is so intense and has such high ideals that small failures are personally devastating.*
- *A placebound beginner who has no other teaching or career options if this job does not work out.*
- *A white teacher in an American Indian school and community -- or vice versa.*
- *An innovative teacher in a system that values the status quo.*
- *A beginner in a community in which citizens feel they should determine and report the social and professional behavior of teachers.*

Middle school grades need more help.
Principal

Secondary teachers need the most mentoring.
Principal

The mentee would have succeeded without mentoring because of maturity level.
Principal

***BUT NOT ALWAYS!** *Some very good newcomers are entering the profession these days. Some of them have a maturity of background, experience, personal and professional stability not usually associated with entry-level teachers. Such individuals may not need mentoring, or at least need it to a lesser degree. For example, growing up in a teaching family may expose a future candidate to the everyday concerns of teaching. That was the discussion around the supper table every evening. On the other hand, growing up in a teaching family could create such high self-expectations that little failures could be personal disasters.*

Component No. 8

Selection of Mentors

The manual now addresses the next consideration in program implementation, the selection of a good mentor from the school faculty. As was the case for mentee candidates, **choosing a mentor is an administrative function**. Both choices made by the same administrator create the best chance for success. Give that power to the individual who best knows individual veteran teachers and the new teacher and who works with them all on a daily basis. The research showed good pairings resulted 90% of the time following this procedure.

Two obvious ingredients for mentoring are the existence of good mentors and a supportive school climate. It is not wise to start the process if other agendas interfere with mentoring's core purpose. If internal discord is sure to result, mentoring is not worth the effort. The building administrator is probably the best judge of a school's individual teachers, and he/she has to decide if acceptable mentors are on site. Good teaching does not by itself insure a good mentor. Districts are cautioned not to go overboard in establishing criteria that administrators must follow in selecting mentors. In the experience of the Montana study, those responsible for selecting mentors relied on their established subjective judgments to make the pairing. They were successful nine times out of ten.

Selection of the mentor matched our existing buddy system selection, so it was a natural.

Principal

In pairing, the issues of age, gender, and race similarity or differences between mentee and mentor never arose during the research study. Every combination possible existed, although not purposely designed. Unless someone makes an issue of it, those considerations should be non-factors and any combination can work.

In small schools, a mentor with similar major/minor may not be possible. A principal may be the logical mentor choice.

Administrator

(Author's note: In this case the superintendent evaluated the mentee.)

Mentors are apt to be chosen from among the best and busiest teachers on the faculty. They have the respect of peers, administration, and non-certified staff. Respect is critical because mentors will be using their knowledge, influence and leverage to help the new teacher. Applying these powers within a school is a delicate dance at best. To use them for the benefit of a newcomer demands they be vested in someone with unquestioned motives.

A positive flexible outlook is needed. Plenty of negative self-perception is apt to be in the beginner's mind already and many mistakes will be made. A mentor who sees the good in events prevents despair from taking over. New teachers do not come with a set of mentoring directions. It takes a flexible person to personalize the school conditions for one special beginner -- individualized instruction, so to speak.

My feelings toward everything my first year were normal and O.K.
Mentee

Mentors need to be "people persons." The relationship with mentees is interactive and often very deeply so. As communication and trust develop between the two, mentees begin to expose their emotions and feelings. Crying may occur and symptoms of frustration are common. Anger surfaces and must be redirected. Anxiety over their own inadequacies leads to fears that the administration may feel they are weak. The mentor's response to the beginner's feelings needs to convey a sense of caring while not assuming the novice's professional or personal responsibilities.

My mentor tries to give too much information – overwhelming.
Mentee

Other considerations in mentor selection beyond personal and professional qualifications exist. One is experience in teaching subject content and teaching pupils similar to what the new teacher is now undergoing. If the mentor has "been there, done that" it becomes very valuable knowledge that will be immediately useful to the beginner. Current or prior classes in the same subject or same content area are desirable. In small districts this may not be possible. One alternative is to pick a mentor from another content area but who is very familiar with the students and community. Be careful about using a teacher from another district or an itinerant teacher whose immediate accessibility is a problem. Beginners may need help in the hallway just before next period starts.

The mentor's availability increased my comfort right from the start.
Mentee

The issue of immediate help implies physical proximity. Nothing is quite so comforting to a mentee as to be within earshot or someone who can help. If not a few doors away, some part of their duties should enable them to see each other a few times each day on an informal basis. Even with these arrangements, the advantage of scheduled uninterrupted talking time for the pair should not be overlooked.

> ◆**BUT NOT ALWAYS!** *One large district hired the new teacher into a position that distributed her responsibility among several buildings. Do you pick a mentor from one of the schools? In this case, the administration chose as mentor the retired teacher who had just vacated the same position. In a rural one-teacher district, a former teacher at the school who was*

now working for the regional co-op became the mentor. Her responsibilities took her to the school on a regular basis plus she lived on a ranch not too far from the building.

Component No. 9
Administrative Support

The purpose of administrative support is to provide a school climate favorable to mentoring. The initial responsibility takes place when individuals at the district level decide on the rationale and scope of the operation. Now the responsibility shifts to the building administrator.

The impact of mentoring will be directly seen and felt within the context of a particular school. The school staff and perhaps the parents need to be kept informed about the program so rumors and false assumptions do not start.

A school's human dynamics (a context condition) could determine program success. Is there a power broker on staff whose acceptance is critical? Does the community or staff feel that beginners should have to work their way up socially before being accepted? An experienced teacher's aide may already be scheduled to work with the new teacher. Will that aide accept professional decisions made by a newcomer when "we never did it that way before"? Will the janitor complain about any new teacher who does not keep pupils' desks in straight rows to facilitate his cleaning?

An aide created a problem, talking behind the new teacher's back.
Administrator

The building administrator may be able to personalize for mentors whatever rewards and recognition the district may have arranged. The administrator might negotiate with the mentor some appropriate recognition that would suffice even if the district has none. Released period(s) during the week, reduced lunchroom or bus duties, and convention travel budget are examples. Most veteran teachers have some aspect of their work they would like enhanced or from which they would like relief and are thus possibilities for negotiation. The mentorship research found that mentees were sometimes brought into the reward system, usually by some type of direct or in-kind assistance like a beginner's curriculum materials fund, convention travel/registration, new teacher's choice of an equipment purchase, time to visit other classes, or time to visit specialty teachers or classes in another school. This mentee help was often initiated at the request of mentors or administrators who viewed it as part of the total assistance package.

The school hired a sub for my mentor so she could visit my classroom.
Mentee

> *Building administrators can go a long way toward program success by insuring that opportunity exists for mentor-mentee talk. Scheduled time together during the school day is "optimal." If the two have a mutual preparation period where they can be alone, good communication can result. Time alone before or after school can work, but it should be respected as scheduled time. It is very easy to sacrifice talking time when the pressures of students and activities call.*

Another avenue for communication occurs when mentor and mentee are able to be together away from school. We are not talking social life here, although that can help, but rather school related activity without the daily pressures of students and teaching. A trip taken together to a convention, a joint presentation at a clinic out-of-town, regional meetings with other mentorship schools -- these are examples. Even if mentor and mentee have different destinations once they arrive at a distant city, the ride together is still "quality time."

The frequency of advice was beneficial.
Mentee

These described communication opportunities are overlaid with impromptu informal questions and information passed between the two. Physical proximity, similar assignments and having the same pupils will help address immediate concerns and are certainly an expected part of mentoring. One mentee found himself as assistant basketball coach to the head coach mentor. The mentee coined the phrase "on the bench" to refer to the informal talk that transpired in that coaching situation.

Part of program monitoring is the need for administrators to periodically discuss with the pair how they feel the mentoring process is working. One facet of that assessment should involve the formal communication time. Is it enough? Too much? Can we ease off of it later in the year? Another very effective practice is to let the two observe each other teaching. That will generate much follow-up conversation.

A final bit of advice for administrators: Mentors are potentially in a vulnerable position with the other teachers and with the beginner, vulnerable in that a violation of trust can destroy respect and most certainly will destroy a mentoring relationship. School principals need to ensure that administrative evaluations of the new teacher are in no way connected to the mentor's responsibility. Avoid conveying any formal or informal impression that the confidential talk between mentor and mentee is being used to evaluate the new teacher. This caution applies both to mentors and to their administrators. Respect for confidentiality is absolutely critical! Mentors can help new teachers prepare for evaluations, but the actual process is still the administrator's job. Over the span of a year, an administrator may begin to pick up bits and pieces of information about the new teacher during the course of normal conversation with the mentor. The research looked into this and found it not to be a detriment. Again the point is don't specifically seek out evaluation information from mentors.

I appreciated the sense of "safe-talk" between us.
Mentor

Component No. 10

Other Help for New Teachers

School district and building personnel have an interest in the new teacher's success with or without a mentoring program. To some degree, their own welfare is also at stake. They will have to help compensate if the beginner falters or can enjoy the benefits of a successful new colleague. Other staff members can help new teachers perhaps in ways the mentor cannot. Mentors feel a special responsibility because of the formalized nature of the mentoring arrangement. But for others, personal or professional kinships may develop with the novice. Small acts of kindness and assistance from various persons on the school staff have "welcome" written all over them. The mentor will not be well versed about each and every issue that may concern a beginner. **No law says another teacher cannot help.**

Mentors, of and by themselves, cannot make a new teacher feel welcome in the school.
Mentee

New teachers appreciate faculty potluck dinners (with the newcomers perhaps excused from bringing a dish) and other social functions. But don't let them find their way alone to these functions. It is very comforting to be invited by a veteran teacher, whether it be the mentor or someone else. Don't overlook the gratifying effect an invitation can have when the autumn teacher's convention rolls around.

My mentor networked me with other staff.
Mentee

A beginner who drives alone and stays alone in what may be a strange city can be a lonely individual.

Top Expectations of New Teachers:

1. *Develop rapport with staff and pupils*
2. *Classroom management*
3. *Discipline skills*
4. *Curriculum understanding*
5. *Inner workings of school*
6. *Learning climate*

1993-94 Administrators

One helpful idea that the beginning teachers in the research study suggested was a district/school packet of useful printed information; an **"early survival packet"** they called it, containing such help as (a) beginner do's and do not's, (b) explanations and details of district paperwork and, (c) procedures for obtaining keys, parking spots, etc. The purpose of the packet is to put on paper the everyday information that it is assumed everyone knows (but beginners don't). Sometime later in the fall, the packet could be returned to the office with new comments by the recent user. This packet would be updated before being passed on to another newcomer next year. A school-produced videotape was another suggested possibility.

If it is within the power of the district or administration to do so, the **extra-curricular duties of the beginner ought to be kept to a minimum.** As was noted in the prioritized concerns of new teachers in Component No. 1, this responsibility can be an overwhelming consumer of a beginner's thought and time. District officials responsible for hiring need to realize that interview candidates will nod "yes" to just about any extra-curricular possibility suggested to them. Graduates of college teacher education programs are typically encouraged to accept extra duties to enhance employment chances. But with high visibility and high expectation assignments, they have little idea of the impacts on their lives.

Extra curricular was a drain.
Principal

Hold regional meetings of new teachers.
Administrator

The other 25% of benefit.

Mentees can be a great source of help to one another -- if they can find each other. Sections later in the manual will address how the "other 25%" of mentoring's potential benefit can be implemented. To be brief, if the school/district can use its connections and networking to identify other new teachers and arrange for them to get together, a tremendous boost for beginners will result. Why? Even with a mentor's assurances, a new teacher tends to feel that the stress, the new challenges, and the general sense of inadequacy are his or her problems alone. "No other teachers, not even other beginners, are experiencing what I am going through!" It is a great revelation to learn from other beginners that those feelings are almost universal. **"You, too?" is a great sense of relief.** New teachers who are able to trade war stories come away with new ideas to try, new perspectives, and renewed vigor. This collective catharsis has an effect that is hard to duplicate by any other means. If a large district or a group of smaller districts could organize an initial meeting of new teachers, either as a professional or social event, this extra benefit could be realized. A sectional for new teachers at the fall convention would be great; not too much structure, let them trade stories. Incidentally, mentors can also gain much from meeting with their counterparts.

How about helping new teachers by providing workshops, college courses, or other inservice? The experience of the research study was that this realm of opportunity was not generally valued by beginners. They have too many other concerns to wrestle with during the first year. Some possible exceptions might work, however. If the instruction is geared to immediate problem solutions, offered in a language the beginners understand, and is taught by a respected person who lets beginners ask about and relate the lessons to their own unique school conditions, then the new teachers may respond. Some new teachers may already be thinking of master's level work, so for them early inservice credits are appreciated. But normally, it is too soon to have that kind of motivation. Mentors can plant the seeds of motivation for later in-service or graduate work, however.

➤ Finally, a closing comment on helping new teachers is in order. No amount of assistance, from mentors or any other source, will take the place of the beginner's responsibility for his/her own professional and personal behavior. Mentoring is not expected to be the damage control tool that will rectify a new teacher's legal or ethical problems. Mentors may offer words of caution, but they do not control a beginner's personal conduct. Information about community standards, district policy, building regulations, administrators, other teachers, and individual students often pass between mentors and mentees. But it is the new teacher who has to apply the knowledge in a manner befitting a professional. ➤

The beginner can be doomed from the start for violating moral standards – mentoring won't be able to help.

Manual Authors

Component No. 11

Evaluation of Program

During the spring of the program's first year, the original planning committee (Component No. 2) should schedule an

It is best to develop specific local activities to evaluate program effectiveness.
Mentor

evaluation meeting. Also in attendance ought to be the district program administrator, building administrators involved during the past year, and mentors and mentees. The meeting purpose would be to review the attainment of goals previously identified in the "Rationale and Goals for Mentoring" and "Scope of the Operation" (New teacher growth, retention, mentor roles, etc.). The program review and evaluation should be used to make appropriate changes, including goal modification and the ultimate decision about continuing. The next cycle of mentoring will soon begin and alterations need to be in place before it starts.

How are the results of a mentoring program measured? The planning committee may have already defined indicators in its earlier work or may have deferred until a year of experience has transpired. **Hard quantitative data may be scarce.** Were there enough new teachers to compare with past retention? Was there a reduction in the number of problems usually encountered by beginning teachers? By how much?

The sooner the new teacher understands the ins and outs, the fewer the problems.
Administrator

Decisions will likely have to be based on qualitative program results. The impressions and attitudes gained from a year of experience can yield very useful information. Either by survey instruments or verbally, administrators, mentors, and mentees can be questioned about program impact. Also, their personal reactions about program components can help decide whether successes and problems were the result of program structure, the personalities involved, or both.

Those interested about specific questions and measures that could generate qualitative data can refer to the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program final report available from CSPAC (Appendix B).

Summary and Timeline for Implementation

The purpose of this section is to summarize essential program components and some of their parts into a suggested action timeline. A checklist for district and building level participants is provided. The sequence is designed for a larger district in which mentoring is apt to involve several layers of personnel. Flexibility in application is appropriate because differences in school size, number of mentees, and ongoing program success/problems may dictate abbreviated or added steps. Some of the suggestions were not used by schools during the mentorship research study because the project itself administered some activities that normally would be district or building level functions. Some steps were suggested by mentors, mentees and administrators as a result of their experiences. Many of the steps may already be practiced within schools when a new idea is attempted.

Year Prior to implementation	**District Level**	**Building Level**
Tentative decision to introduce mentoring	☐	
District planning committee formed and sets program	☐	
Rationale for mentoring		
Goals of the program		
Scope of the operation		
Administrator responsible for program chosen	☐	
Tentative pool of participants: schools, principals, mentors, new hire positions	☐	○
School board approval	☐	
Before school starts - hiring season		
Select mentee candidates by position or person	☐	○
Select mentor pool by schools		○
August		
Mentee-mentor pairs matched		○
Introduce the pair before school		○
Allow some time together before school		
Mentor and mentee meet with principal		○
Discuss program		
Set tentative talk times for pair		
Discuss school and personal goals for mentoring		
Define roles		
Early survival information for mentee	☐	○
District/school packets, handbook's keys, office forms	☐	○

District Level	Building Level	
		September
	○	Faculty meetings with introductions and program information
☐	○	Special school or district meetings with new teachers, if used
		Social functions involving mentees
☐	○	Mentor and mentee meet with principal
	○	Discuss and assess relationship
		Discuss formal and informal communication opportunities thus far
		Mentor-mentee action plans
		Mentee's other support needs
		October
	○	Classroom observation and feedback for mentee
	○	Professional development plans (IPDP) drafted by/for mentee
	○	Teacher's convention plans
	○	Mentor and mentee meet with principal
		Review talk opportunities and utilization
		Resource needs of mentee
		Planned evaluation schedule
		November
	○	Classroom observation and feedback for mentee
	○	IPDP or similar plan refined
	○	Holiday implications, school and personal
	○	Mentor and mentee meet with principal
		Results of communication opportunities
		Review mentor-mentee action plans
☐	○	Parent -Teacher Conferences
		December
	○	Formative evaluation discussions
	○	Classroom observation and feedback for mentee
	○	Christmas holiday implications
	○	Mentor and mentee meet with principal
		Review communications - frequency/needs
		January
	○	Semester review of observations
	○	Review and revise mentee IPDP
	○	2nd semester needs of mentee
	○	Mentor and mentee meet with principal
		Mentor-mentee action plans for last half
		Communications review; reschedule?

	District Level	Building Level
February		
Observation and feedback for mentee		○
Continued formative evaluations		○
Midwinter slump remedies		○
Mentee meeting with principal		○
Mentee reactions to program		
Communications assessment		
March		
Mentor meeting with principal		○
Mentor reactions to program		
Communications needs assessment		
April		
Summative evaluations: preparations, results and implications	☐	○
Mentee IPDP review		○
Late year communications: Principal monitors needs, utilization, frequency		○
May		
Inventory/supply help for mentee		○
Building level evaluation of mentor program by participants		○
District planning committee meeting	☐	
Evaluation, reports and recommendations	☐	○
Review and assessment of goals		
Plans for next year		
Pool of potential participants		
Board report	☐	
June		
Recognition of participants and celebration	☐	
District administrative review of program	☐	
Start cycle again	☐	

Chapter Three

ADMINISTRATORS

Administrators using this section should understand that not all parts relate to their school situation (size, personnel, location and conditions). Users should decide which parts of this section are relevant to their situation and the sequence of application. Throughout this section there will be references to related items in Chapter Two and the Appendices. The following has been sectioned in a suggested sequence of events or steps:

Staff and Community Involvement

In order to ensure support for a mentoring program, it is essential to involve the professional staff and community in the decision to initiate or not to initiate a mentoring program. The idea to explore a mentoring program may come from the community, school board, professional staff or administration, but the establishment of a committee to investigate the possibility must come from the administration. Thus, a committee should be appointed representing administration, teachers and community members and meet during the year preceding possible implementation and decide on at least two major considerations: First, the district's rationale for mentoring and second, the scope of the mentoring operation. See Appendix C #1 for a sample letter to potential committee members requesting their participation. Also, in Appendix C #2 is another sample letter which details the responsibilities of the committee.

Involvement!

Ownership!

Chapter 2 - Components No. 1, No. 3, and No. 4

The school administration must be represented on the steering committee due to released time, travel and budget implications. According to the size of the school district this person could be a school board member, superintendent, principal or supervising teacher.

Program Administration and Identification of Mentors

Who oversees the program?

Good mentors available? Where?

If the steering committee recommends in favor of the mentor program, the administration must decide on the administrator of the program. The administrator in charge of the building or buildings be responsible for the mentor program in those same schools. Basically, the mentoring program is a helping relationship between an experienced teacher and a beginning teacher, but someone with authority needs to be involved to make and carry out decisions that involve the school's operations and procedures. Also, physical proximity and constant familiarity with the program and participants is necessary for the program administrator. However, in a large district there may be a district program administrator such as an assistant superintendent to coordinate the program. Also, at this time the administration must ascertain the number of teachers who would be available to serve as mentors. The administration, either through a survey or by selected interviews, should know the number of teachers available to be possible mentors. The number of willing potential mentors will also dictate the size of the program. For example, the steering committee may recommend the entire school district, consisting of three buildings, be involved in the program. However after a survey, it becomes clear the availability of willing mentors is in only one building, and the program may have to be limited to that one school. See Appendix C #3 for sample survey.

Chapter 2 - Components No. 5 and No. 8

School Board Validation

Formalize!

The next recommended step is to have the school board validate the mentoring program. The following should be presented to the board:

1. Steering committee recommendation
    a. District rationale for mentoring
    b. Program goals
    c. Scope of operation
2. Administration of the program
3. Availability of mentors

4. Budget considerations
5. Program evaluation plan
6. Schedule of periodic reports to school board on program progress

Chapter 2 - Component No. 6

New Teacher Involvement

During the interview process the mentor program should be explained to the new teacher candidates. According to the school policy a new teacher must participate in the program or have the option of participating. Thus, in some school districts the decision to hire or not to hire may be influenced by a teacher candidate's decision regarding participation in the mentor program. In some school districts where participation is mandatory it may become part of the employment contract.

Chapter 2 - Component No. 7

Matching the pair

The superintendent chose the mentor as the principal was new to the building.
Superintendent

Soon after the hiring, the program building administrator should make the mentor/mentee pairing match after consulting with potential mentors from the mentor pool. The mentor and mentee should be informed by personal contact followed up with a formal announcement by letter. See Appendix A #4 for sample letter. Also, a similar announcement should be made in the faculty newsletter.

Chapter 2 - Component No. 8

Formalizing: Pre-school Meetings

Bring both in early--pay them.
Superintendent

During the pre-school meetings with the mentor/mentee teams the following should be covered:

a. District rationale for mentoring
b. Scope of operation
c. Schedule meeting times for mentor/mentees to talk
d. Schedule meeting times for mentor/mentee teams and administrator to talk.
e. Identify the roles and responsibilities of the mentor, mentee and administrator.
f. Discuss and compare the expectations for the program by the mentor, mentee and administrator.

Chapter 2 - Component Numbers 1, 3, 4, 9, 10, and 11

Formalize some more!

On-going Responsibilities

During the school year the administrator should meet with each of the mentor/mentee teams on a regular basis at least once a month during the first semester. Later on, meetings could be scheduled as needed.

Chapter 2 - Timeline for Implementation

Mentor is not socially active. Other staff members compensated for the mentor in that regard.
Principal

The primary responsibility of the administrator is to provide and **support a positive environment** for mentoring in the school. This means constant attention to keeping the student, faculty, staff and community involved and informed regarding the program. The other major responsibility it is to continually evaluate and **expedite the communication**, cooperation and assistance to the beginning teacher from the mentor and other teachers. Also, the administrator will be directly involved if there is a question of disengagement due to incompatibility between the mentor and beginning teacher. Actions identified by the steering committee should be followed. Finally the **mentoring program should not be used in the mentee evaluation process.** Confidentiality between the mentor and beginning teacher must be strictly enforced. Also, the administration should make a progress report to the school board at least twice during the school year.

Chapter 2 - Component No. 9 and No. 11

Program Evaluation

In May the building administrator and the mentor/mentee teams should meet with the original steering committee to evaluate the program. See Appendix C #5 for a sample memo detailing the responsibilities of the evaluation committee.

Chapter 2 - Component No. 11

Did it work?

Based upon the committee's recommendations a final mentor program report should be prepared by the program administrator for the school board regarding the evaluation of this year's program and recommendations for the next cycle of mentoring.

The Other 25%

Let them talk with each other

In addition to the above steps the program administrator should consider arranging meetings during the year when the district mentors and mentees can meet with other mentors and mentees from their district and from other districts. The administrators of the Beginning Teacher Support Program found that such meetings were considered very beneficial by both the mentor and mentees. Such meetings can bring about the "other 25%" of the mentoring potential. The program administrators are in the best position to arrange the networking between the mentors and mentees of other schools and districts.

Chapter Four

THE MENTOR - A CONVERSATION ABOUT ROLES

Chapter Four is for mentors, explaining their responsibilities when implementing the mentoring position in a school and their interactive roles with beginning teachers.

A Message to Mentors

Your selection as a mentor is a compliment to your professionalism and the ability to use it to assist the development of a beginning teacher. The term professional implies a person who does what ought to be done, not just what has to be done. When a new teacher yourself, you probably got through the first year by trial and error. But with the pressures on new teachers today and their goldfish bowl lives, trial and error is not necessarily the way it ought to be done. Volunteering your time to help a novice teacher get started is an act that will enhance your own sense of professionalism. You are within a select group of people who advance the profession in a tangible way not often available to most teachers.

You may have some worries about becoming a mentor without being specifically trained for the part. If your district can provide you with that educational opportunity, by all means take advantage of it. But even without training, you have been selected as someone who has the necessary talent to do the job with a high probability of success. That talent comes from your experience, knowledge, and willingness to interact with a new teacher. Mentoring is much like parenting, where neither the job nor the beginner comes with sets of directions. **This manual is designed to help you with some guidelines but is not a step-by-step cookbook.** Those who were mentors before you cautioned the manual authors not to create a set of exact mentoring expectations. Their reasoning was that mentors might compare their own performance against the standards and conclude they might not be doing the job correctly. That would dampen the flexibility and spontaneity between mentor and mentee that arises from their own special relationship within their own unique school context.

At first, I questioned my own capabilities.
Mentor

Mentors need the right amount of information without also creating expectation anxiety.
Mentor

There is no one correct way to mentor. "Going with the flow" seems to be good advice.

I learned as much as the new teacher.
Mentor

Working one-on-one with a new teacher through a relationship formalized by the school will result in your becoming the most significant professional influence on the first year of that beginner's career. You will be the protégé's primary source of information, knowledge that veteran teachers know well but is all new to the novice. But you will do something special to that information. You will personalize it, tailoring it to the needs of that one new teacher as he/she works in your school. **The potential impact of your help deepens as the relationship between your mentee and you develops.** You will be made aware of the beginner's private feelings about the school, community, teachers, students, administration and most importantly, about the beginner him/herself. This is **privileged, confidential information** to be used only between the two of you as a way to help the beginner grow. As mentor, you do not have a responsibility to reveal it to the administration. Neither should that official(s) ask you for confidential information that might contribute to the formal evaluation of the new teacher. Helping a novice prepare for evaluations is appropriate mentor activity, but being the evaluator is not.

For the two of us, a sense of purpose, bonding.
Mentor

Implementing Mentoring Within a School

Some modern professions, even with the long periods of training require newcomers to serve internships under an experienced practitioner. Teaching is different in that novices are usually given a load equal to that of veterans and expected to start work in the isolation of their classrooms. The transition to full competent professional status is a difficult adjustment period, not always successful. The first teaching job is especially stressful because the generalized knowledge from the college teacher education program usually does not transfer by itself into the practical knowledge needed to work in the new teaching position. Instead, it must be refitted to the unique context of the new school and be combined with an avalanche of new information that is completely foreign. **School districts that adopt mentoring as part of an induction program or as a separate effort have taken a significant step toward helping new teachers succeed and grow.**

I found myself reliving the experience of a first-year teacher.
Mentor

All of the district's organizational work in starting a mentoring program is ultimately directed at two people, the new teacher and the mentor. You may or may not have been involved when the idea of mentoring arose and the decision was made to proceed. Some of your colleagues may also be acting as mentors this year or you may be the only one. Regardless of the scope of mentoring in your school district, **you are the most important gear in the mentoring machinery**. You will implement the district's plans at the level where it counts most -- with the beginning teacher. What parts of that implementation process will most directly affect you?

Selecting a Mentor -- Why You Were Chosen

Chapter Two describes the work and considerations that mentoring project planners look at before starting a program. The effort ensures that the district has a plan for mentoring and that a nurturing climate is established to support the work of mentors. With these assurances in place, mentors are chosen. But this groundwork may not always be the case. A school district may be very small; one school may decide to try mentoring on its own; the decision to go ahead may have been made late in the summer; these are conditions that may need the involvement of only a few key people who are willing to experiment. The mentor might be included in planning from the very beginning or possibly you were never aware of the program until just before school started. Either way, to be seriously considered and then selected as a mentor means that **your professional and personal qualities match well with the needs of one new teacher** in one particular school at this point in time.

I have a long-standing ownership in our school program. I appreciated the opportunity to bring the mentee in.
Mentor

Mentoring is a good lesson for a future administrator.
Mentor

Another reason for your selection is the anticipation that you and your mentee will develop a special relationship. Professional colleagues, yes; personal friends, perhaps; but much more than that is envisioned. A relationship does not have to blossom immediately to be effective. But in time, it needs to grow into a posture of caring, mutual trust and honest communication. **Genuine interaction between mentor and mentee is the heart and soul of mentoring.** Not everyone has the personality or willingness to become involved to that degree with a beginning teacher he/she may not yet even know.

You probably possess a positive outlook that brings out the best in people and situations. The beginning teacher will generate a multitude of negative thoughts about him/herself and does not need the association of a chronic complainer or critic at this early vulnerable stage. Your community and school will depend on you to put the best foot forward so that the newcomer's first teaching experience has the best chance of also being positive.

The Length of Your Involvement

Start the process early.
Mentor

Mentoring normally covers one school year. Depending on the district's program organization or the needs of the individual mentee, some time before and after the school year may be needed. The district may ask you to help implement the program before the school year starts in one or more of the following ways:

Pairs should meet as a group during the summer.
Mentor

Work on district or building mentoring plans the previous year or during the summer

Help select a pool of potential mentors by district or building level

Volunteer to be included in a mentor pool

Agree to be a mentor for a specific new teacher

Meet your mentee before school starts

Spend time orienting the mentee before school year starts (You may decide to do this on your own)

We became friends. Mutual reliance on each other for ideas.
Mentee

After the school year ends, the district may ask you to help evaluate the program. Your year's experience, coupled with that of the administrator and the mentee, may be the only program information available for your school. It may be combined with other experience opinions to evaluate a district-wide effort. The mentoring program design may ask you to spend some closure time with your mentee after the pupils are gone, or the two of you may decide to do it on your own. As often happens with mentors and mentees, they become good friends, and contact continues naturally on both a professional and personal basis.

Between these pre- and post-year possibilities, the daily work of mentoring takes place. The early weeks and months of school are the most intense for a new teacher, and your involvement with the mentee will probably match that early intensity. Time spent with the mentee may begin to taper off, but don't be surprised if it continues strong. Early needs for immediate and frequent information may be replaced by discussions about deeper educational issues. Special events such as the semester end, tournaments, or inventory/supply ordering may require extra help. Regarding the "ought to" aspect of professionalism, the mentor's length and degree of commitment should be flexible, based on program and mentee needs.

Mentees don't know or articulate what they need/ want.
Mentor

Incentives for Mentor Involvement

Incentives are needed to secure good mentors.
Mentor

Ample rationale exists for a district to offer incentives as part of its mentoring program and for you to be rewarded for your involvement. One reason is that, as a mentor, **you are entering a formalized arrangement** to perform a specific task above and beyond your contract obligations. Mentoring is much more than an occasional use of your time and considerably more involved than a "buddy" system. Your relationship with the protégé will be structured by the administration to some degree; it will be monitored; it will be evaluated. Employees who function under these conditions seldom do it without recognition.

Other reasons for incentives are more personal and moral. Mentors typically are selected from among the busiest and most involved teachers in the school. Administrators hesitate to ask them to do more unless accompanied by an offer of compensation or other recognition.

Along with other attributes, mentors are chosen for their willingness to help another professional. If that attitude is formalized into a responsibility, then it is worthy of reward and recognition. **This responsibility factor looms large in the minds of both mentors and mentees.** The incentive cements together the ideas of formal responsibility and commitment. Therefore, the mentor feels obligated to make time for the mentee. The new teacher, knowing the mentor is formally obligated, does not feel he/she is imposing when asking for help.

If a teacher is committed to becoming a mentor, the chances are strong his/her motivations go well beyond immediate material rewards. That teacher is likely to consider the benefits mentoring will have on his/her own professional growth and appreciate the opportunity to participate. There is the internal satisfaction of knowing that the profession and children will be better off because of what you have done. The existence of an incentive system sends the message that these benefits are worthy uses of a district's resources. At the end of a year's work, mentors were not shy about stating the benefits they had personally and professionally gained. The following comments were typical:

Affirmation and new found enthusiasm
Prompted me to rethink the way I interact with staff, parents, and students
I helped someone reach their goal -- sense of satisfaction
Teaching does have some unique rewards
Insight into another's concerns/reflecting on my own
Positive feeling of being able to help someone in a trusting relationship

(Note: This list of comments and the other lists of quotes found later in this chapter were taken from the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program Final Report, Appendix B)

The experience gave me a positive feeling of being able to help someone in a trusting relationship.
Mentor

- ➢ Incentives available for mentors can be classified as financial, professional, or personal. The most obvious monetary incentive is a stipend paid by the district directly to the mentor. One alternative to direct payment is for the district to pick up expenses that the mentor might normally personally incur for convention expenses, travel, or other activity associated with school. Other options include district-paid college summer credits, school lunches, or a special equipment purchase. Experienced mentors say that compensation by itself is insufficient -- mentors must feel good about helping someone.

- ➢ Professional incentives are those that advance the status of the mentor. Districts may have forms of professional recognition that were negotiated or individual schools may devise their own. Horizontal salary scale advancement in lieu of college credits, attendance at a noted theatrical performance for the drama teacher mentor, bringing in a consultant to help the mentor initiate an innovation, released time -- these are examples that could enhance the professional stature of a mentor.

- Personal incentives are changes in a mentor's school duties or routines that the mentor feels are important and satisfying. An extra amount of released time prior to performances/events, no lunchroom duty, reduced playground shifts, no ticket duty at home games, and a higher rank in budget priorities are possibilities.

- What role do you as a mentor play in implementing the incentive system? You may have limited input at early stages of the process at the district level. If the reward system is already in place, the year-end evaluation may be the avenue by which you can validate rewards or suggest changes . But if the incentive system is still undecided or has been left flexible, you may be able to work with a district or building administrator. Within the limitations of financial, professional, or personal options available, you may be able to negotiate one or several options appropriate for your priorities. At the end of the year, both you and the school/district will want to assess the adequacy and impact of rewards.

Mentors can facilitate two other incentive possibilities. One is the inclusion of your mentee in the reward system. With administrative agreement and your concurrence, new teachers may participate in travel, workshops, special materials/ equipment purchases, released time to observe other classes, or other opportunity not normally available to them. This is a case of your having earned the reward but wishing to share it or, as mentor, helping create other assistance for the mentee you cannot directly provide.

A possibility:
Bring the mentee into the reward system.
Authors

A second possibility you can facilitate is to encourage your district or school to help organize meetings of mentors and mentees in your district or region. Getting together with your counterparts is a very satisfying reward in itself. This manual alludes to the "other 25% of mentoring benefit" that can be realized by this method. Experienced mentors and mentees from the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program were adamant in emphasizing the value of such meetings. However, don't be alarmed to find that you may be the only mentor in the area. It is hoped that your effort will help the idea catch on in other schools.

The other 25%

The Mentor's Interactive Role

Mentoring is a person-to-person program. Whether you want to call it communication, interaction, or use the terms interchangeably, the mentor-mentee relationship that arises from it is the essence of the whole process. No amount of district organization, incentives, and good intentions will substitute for a relationship built on trust, respect, communication and confidentiality. The chances are high that you and your mentee will have a successful relationship; you have been chosen to enhance that probability. All aspects of a relationship need not read like a textbook ideal. But if the primary goals are reached -- the new teacher's professional growth and sense of well-being -- then your work will have been accomplished.

It All Starts With Communication

The opportunity and willingness to talk is the starting point for interaction. Working with your administrator, try to arrange some structured uninterrupted time during the school day or week when you can be alone with your mentee. Released time (an hour or so) during the week is good if your class can be covered. Same-hour preparation periods can work if you have a quiet place to meet and stay clear of the teacher's lounge. Before or after school is another possibility, but make sure the administration, mentee, and you honor the arrangement by keeping the time free of pupils and duties.

Frequent informal talk really helps.
Authors

Structured time will enable you to discuss a multitude of topics or explore a few in depth. But much of what the mentee wants to know does not demand that amount of time and is needed on an immediate informal basis. Therefore, a minute or two between classes, over lunch, on the way into school, or sandwiched between other conversation are ways in which informal talk occurs. Close physical proximity in room locations really helps. If the two of you cross paths in the discharge of your daily duties, it will assist informal communication.

As mentor, you may be able to use your influence and leverage (after all, you are a veteran and know the system!)

to bring about some of the structured and informal talk possibilities.

But keep in mind that opportunity does not necessarily translate into reality unless the commitment is there to use it. One very beneficial use of your "power" is to suggest that you and your mentee observe each others' classes or perhaps team teach. You are not trying to evaluate one another, but rather to watch ideas and techniques materialize in the classroom atmosphere. There will be much to discuss afterward, particularly the "whys" of instructional planning.

Another option in facilitating interaction opportunity is to spend longer periods of **time together away from school**. Do not turn social events at which both mentee and you are present into school talk sessions. Everyone needs a break from school and purely social time is valuable in itself.

But school related travel or activities without the pressure of students being present are excellent opportunities for talk. Invite your mentee (and nobody else!) to ride with you to a convention. Extend an offer that he/she room with you. If the two of you teach the same specialty, traveling to a workshop together might be possible. Invite the mentee to ride with you to an out-of-town game. This is all quality time which allows conversation to progress beyond mere words into the realm of interaction.

Traveling together to meetings was significant.
Mentor

As a respected member of the school faculty, you may choose to use your influence and status to create better conditions for the mentee. Some of your colleagues or staff members may try to take advantage of the new kid on the block. You may become protective if your mentee starts to get all the dregs. New teachers are reluctant to say no because of social pressure, job security, or the perception they will not be accepted (Priority issue No. 3, Chapter 2).

Administrator used mentor as an intermediary between other staff members and the new teacher.
Mentor

One of the greatest reliefs beginners feel occurs with the realization that they don't have to do it all. Using your leverage directly to help mentees is a delicate decision on your part. Providing information to help them fathom what is happening or to assess the situation they may be getting into is not so overt but equally helpful. **New teachers do not know how to say "no".** Your suggestions that help them from getting in over their heads will be appreciated.

Qualities of Good Mentors as Seen by Beginning Teachers

The above suggestions will help set the stage but will not ensure a good relationship. Communication will occur if first, there is something to talk about (that is seldom a problem in teacher mentoring) and second, both people perceive in each other an attitude of genuine interest and caring. When mentees were asked how this attitude was exhibited in good mentors, they came up with the following consensus list of **"qualities desired in mentors"**:

My mentor allowed me to fail or succeed as a teacher.
Mentee

Approachable
Candid but non-critical
Knowledgeable
Open minded
Innovative
Similar teaching area
Compatible style
Reality based
Believes in mentoring
Accepting
Reliable
Treat new teacher as equal
Confidential

This list is only representative and there were good mentors that did not meet all the qualities. For example, in small schools "similar teaching area" was often not possible. Nothing is magical about the desired qualities; they are common to most personable, professional, experienced teachers.

What about negative **qualities to avoid** in mentors? Mentees again came up with a consensus list:

Too experienced to the point of being stone hardened
Selfish
Narrow minded
Lack of motivation
Tries to give too much information -- overwhelming
Smothering mother hen

This list seems to say that mentors should avoid trying to mold the beginner in his/her own image. Instead, the novice's development needs to proceed along its own unique path but within acceptable boundaries.

Some of the synonyms mentees use when describing mentors are also clues to qualities that promote interaction. A coach brings out the best talents in people. A counselor helps an individual work within a system whose rules are designed for larger groups of people. Guides show people the way but do not walk the path for them. Interpreters translate information and events into understandable terms. Confidants listen to one's inner concerns and keep those thoughts confidential.

The Mentee as a Factor in Interaction: It takes two to tango! Even with the best of conditions and with good intentions, there are no guarantees that good communication will result. Fortunately, most mentor-mentee relationships do work well, but some pairings may start slowly and need special attention.

A rare but difficult problem occurs when the mentee really could use the help but does not personally feel it is needed. Or the beginner may be putting up a front to mask some sense of inadequacy. Genuine shyness could prevent a mentee from initiating discussion. Some cultural backgrounds may dictate an aloofness from strangers. Personalities may clash. Whatever the reason or motivation, lack of receptivity demands much mentor patience. Time is on the mentor's side; no rule says communication has to start out with a bang. Mentoring participants can take comfort in knowing that in the experience of the Montana study, more relationship problems occurred at the beginning of the year than at the end. Mentors and mentees who were at first distant usually began to grow together.

Mentor is a beacon – structure facilitated our talking.
Mentee

I was not ready to develop at the professional level my mentor wanted me to – perhaps a second year?
Mentee

One beginning teacher observed her own actions early in the year and said, "I don't even know what I don't know." This quote emphasizes the point that **mentees often have no idea of what questions to start asking**. They have no experience base from which to determine the information they need. After things start to happen to them in the classroom, then they know! Their early questions may be irrelevant but still deserve an answer. The experience of the mentor can break the ice. Without being overbearing, as a mentor you can initiate some conversation and questions. Start slowly and build up by using the time-honored technique of letting people talk about themselves. This is not a devious method in mentoring because teachers who practice reflective thinking about their own teaching have started on the road to professional growth.

Many questions would have otherwise gone unanswered.
Mentee

Our relationship enabled us to see the human side of each other.
Mentee

Great help preparing for administrative evaluation.
Mentee

One final aspect of communication bears some attention. **Beginning teachers love feedback about their professional progress.** No, they are starved for feedback! A school's schedule of observation with feedback by administrators and formative/summative evaluations is usually too infrequent and too late to satisfy that need. As a mentor, you are not replacing the formal mechanism, but you certainly are in the best position to supplement it. New teachers, in the isolation of their classrooms, do not have the opportunity to pick up frequent signals from significant adults. A mentor's responses and comments within the formal and informal communication episodes provide the avenue for candid feedback. Mentees are interested not only in classroom performance (which the mentor may or may not be able to actually observe), but like feedback about their ideas, plans, observations, and reactions to people and events. Most feedback is an accumulation of subtle messages.

> *"**BUT NOT ALWAYS!**" *There may be instances when bold frankness is appropriate, especially if the mentee is planning some controversial action that could end a career in your school.*

Other Techniques to Help Interaction

Your attitude and your mentee's attitude about the relationship between you will determine the productivity of your communication. If both feel comfortable and respectful about the relationship, the process will likely grow on its own even with periods of ups and downs. When asked to comment about **what created good mentoring relationships**, novices made statements like the following:

Mentor volunteered information when appropriate
A good friendship developed
I have a colleague I can talk to
I felt it was my right to ask as a formal mentee
Comforting to know I could go to my mentor anytime
Mutual reliance on each other for ideas
Poor match initially, but finally established ourselves as colleagues
Through communication, we learned to understand each other after a rough start
This person is of great value in my life. I will remain forever grateful

They (mentors) answer questions but do not tell you
what to do
She was approachable and I had complete trust in her

Reflective Questioning: An Opening to Good Communication

Mentees will normally engage well with mentors in communication if it is objective and non-evaluative. In response to questions or if volunteered, mentees need to feel whatever they reveal is accepted for its informational value. It can be disheartening if the listener makes a judgment about the unworthiness of what the mentee said. A pattern of negative judgments may lead the new teacher to conclude that his/her actions and ideas are being matched against those of proven veterans, probably unattainable to a newcomer. If judgments are always good, there may be suspicion that the mentor is not being candid. Early in the relationship, mentees may read into judgmental attitudes the message that they had best not volunteer too much information. As mentor and mentee learn to understand and trust each other, this caution may carry less weight.

Helping new teachers reflect on their own actions and decisions is one method of opening up the lines of communication in a non-threatening and non-evaluative atmosphere. This can be accomplished by **asking mentees questions that generate reflective thinking** and lead them to their own conclusions. The beauty in reflective thinking is that it takes mentors out of the judgment process and places it in the hands of mentees themselves. Mentors not familiar with this method can find suggestions for reflective questioning applicable to first-year teachers in Appendix D of this manual.

I learned how to grow.
Mentee

The Content of Mentor-Mentee Interaction

What topics may I, as mentor, expect the beginning teacher to talk about? What do they want to know? What information are they apt to reveal to me?

To answer those questions about any one beginner is risky business, but patterns in new teacher thinking that provide guidance do exist. Component No. 1 in Chapter Two described the twelve top priority issues that are most universally on the minds of mentored beginning teachers. An analysis of the thoughts and conversations that created that list plus the lesser priority issues not shown in this manual revealed two very significant observations of importance to mentors. (For a complete list of priorities, see the BTSP Final Report, Appendix B.)

Class was a group of "ringers". Some pupils on treatment.
Principal

First, even though the prioritized issues can be generally applied across mentees, the information each mentee wants to know is specific to the school context. An example is priority No. 2, Chapter 2 (discipline). Your mentee at this time is probably not interested in learning more about motivational theory applied to adolescent youngsters. Instead, the mentee wants your thoughts about what parents' or the principal's reactions might be if he tries to keep the 4th period class quiet by using procedure "X." The eventual answer to the discipline dilemma is an individualized solution for this new teacher and probably would not work anywhere else because the context would be different.

Our conversations covered personal problems – suggestions, listening, "that happened to me, too".
Mentee

The second observation has to do with the pattern of the prioritized issues. These fall into a predictable mode that can be used by mentors to anticipate the help that mentees are likely to want. The pattern in this case reveals the early concerns that new teachers feel and is part of what is called the "Concerns Model" (Fuller, 1975). One comment that appears with regularity in various sections of this manual is that the first year of teaching is a time of stress, high emotion, and self-centered interest. The rankings of the twelve prioritized new teacher issues bear out that statement. Other research studies conducted on teacher attitudes reinforce self-interest as the first step in a pattern of concerns typical of teachers facing significant change. The first teaching contract certainly classifies as a major change in a new teacher's life.

The Concerns Model Briefly Explained

New teachers, as well as candidates in pre-service training and in-service veterans, have been studied for nearly two decades to determine what happened to their thinking when confronted with meaningful change. Fuller (1975), Hall (1982), Olsen (1990), and Rogan (1995) were among those who researched teachers undergoing this phenomenon. Among the changes studied were the start of professional courses in college, student teaching, major innovations in an established school structure, and the first teaching position. Change aroused concerns in the minds of teachers, and these concerns progressed through sequential stages in the process of coping. Three stages were identified:

Legitimize the concerns of new teachers.
Mentor

Self The first stage is self-concerns (sounds familiar). Teachers first look at how the change is going to affect them personally. Individuals question their own ability to cope with the stress and reorientation brought about by new circumstances. They ask "What is this new situation going to do to my life?" Much of their response is emotional rather than rational.

Task After resolving self concerns, teachers move on to task concerns. These concerns involve the organization, routines, and methodology necessary to operate a classroom smoothly within the new set of structural conditions. New schemes of instruction and classroom management emerge.

Impact Once task concerns are addressed to satisfaction, teachers advance to impact concerns. These are the ultimate and more desirable concerns that indicate teachers who have progressed to the stage of looking at the change with understanding and professionalism. Not worried anymore how the change will affect them personally or how it will alter their classroom systems, teachers make decisions based on the anticipated pupil learning impact.

***BUT NOT ALWAYS!** *An individual beginner's progress through the stages is apt be an uneven front, with progress rapid on some aspects and slower in others. Beginning teachers may recycle back to an earlier concern if a situation that is completely new arises. The Montana mentorship study found this*

> *regression occurring in some new teachers whose visions of what teaching was going to be like were fixed and inflexible. The concerns stages have no timetable, only a sequence. One purpose of first year mentoring could therefore be phrased in terms of the Concerns Model, i.e., to facilitate the pace and quality of a beginner's movement through the stages of concerns.*

Connecting the prioritized issues of beginning teachers to the stages of concerns gives mentors a fair idea of the help new teachers are likely to seek. Novices will be asking you to help them understand the unique school and community cultures they find themselves in and what the internal dynamics mean to them. But don't be surprised if it does not work out according to the predictions. People are different and no two schools are alike.

Chapter Five

THE BEGINNING TEACHER MENTEE

This chapter is written for new teachers who are starting their first year with help from a mentoring program. The chapter topics emphasize (a) the benefits of mentoring in context learning and (b) the implications of a formalized mentor-mentee relationship.

A Message for Mentees

It was probably not long ago that you graduated from a collegiate teacher education program, after which you received the initial state teaching certificate. The college program prepared you as an **"entry level" candidate for the teaching profession,** and the certificate is the state's assurance to the public that you are a competent teacher. The new contract you signed is a legal document signifying that the school district has faith in your ability to deliver instructional services in return for a salary and benefits. You have made the transition from student to practitioner.

Another aspect of the transition is **the move from "pre-service" to "in-service" status**. From now on, your educational growth will be a combination of your teaching experience, together with opportunities provided by or required by the district. Any additional formal education you pursue will be taken during the same years you are in-service (teaching). The fact that you have been chosen to receive mentor assistance is a symbol of the district's commitment to your first year in-service professional growth. Mentoring is not a sign the district feels you may be a weak beginning teacher. You possess the package of competencies and attitudes to succeed in teaching; if otherwise, the district would not have hired you. Mentoring will accelerate the pace and quality of your early professional growth, enhancing your sense of well being in the process.

My mentor -- an advisor, a confidant.

Mentee

When asked to comment on their college preparation programs, graduates say that field experiences, particularly

I read some of my past journal entries and I sure sound like a whiner.
Mentee

During December I was not feeling good about my own competence.
Mentee

I'm all ready to go next year.
Mentee

student teaching, was of the most value. But even student teaching cannot compare with the intensity and amount of new learning that takes place during the first year of teaching. The reason teachers learn so much during that period appears to be a matter of responsibility. As a student teacher, you could go home at night and not worry because the cooperating teacher had final responsibility for the pupils you were instructing. New teachers realize there is no escaping or deferment of duties and responsibilities. The buck stops here! "I suddenly realized now it was my rear end that was on the line" is a typical reaction when **beginners realize how serious a responsibility teaching really is**. This creates the motivation to learn much and learn fast both by choice and by necessity. Nothing is wrong with learning by experience, but in the pressure cooker of the first year, some of that learning can be unfocused and indiscriminate. Your early thoughts are apt to be about your own survival, instead of how well the students are learning. If fact, first year teachers do expend a great amount of thought and energy on issues not directly related to instruction (Component No. 1, Chapter 2). They tend to take things personally, not yet realizing that much of what pupils and parents do is not their fault or under their control. In spite of these concerns, as a general rule, new teachers still go a good job in the classroom. Given enough time, learning on the job does get more efficient, and coping with classroom and non-teaching issues gets easier. But what happens to pupil learning and to your stress level in the meantime? These are some of the concerns that mentoring seeks to address and make easier for you. The process seeks to provide information personally suited to you through a veteran teacher so you can direct energy to the benefit of pupils and yourself and minimize the energy spent worrying about other things. You and your students will all be happier if your transition to teaching is smoother and faster because of mentoring.

The Benefits of Context Knowledge

The knowledge that new teachers learn on the job is specific to the school in which they are teaching. The particular school creates the need for the teacher to acquire specialized knowledge in order to personally deal with conditions in that school. Another new teacher in the same school would need different knowledge to cope with the same conditions because the teacher is a different user. Another school would create another set of conditions that would require different knowledge. This knowledge that is **learned within the context of a school and applied to teaching in that school is called context knowledge**. It is what individual teachers need to know in order to directly address classroom learning and the multitude of other issues that impact them in the new teaching job. The knowledge is usually put to an immediate use. One educational writer refers to it as "personal practical knowledge" (Hollingsworth 1994).

The learning advantage of the real classroom is that the new teacher has actual pupils in an actual school situation under his/her direct responsibility as the motivation for learning. **The knowledge has tangible direct application; the effectiveness or ineffectiveness can be seen immediately.** Because this direct application and feedback were not possible with most college classes, first-year teachers are often critical of teacher education. Much of what is learned on the job covers the range of content that is commonly referred to as "curriculum and instruction." In other words, what is to be taught and how to teach it. Very few schools teach exactly the same content, even if the district has curriculum guides. Each teacher covers content a little differently. The beginner finds out that teaching methods do not apply universally, but must be adapted to each different group of pupils. As the new teacher gains experience, new ideas that work are added to the pool of usable knowledge. As this knowledge collection grows, the teacher can draw on it at any time for any appropriate teaching purpose with some assurance that the idea(s) will work. The ideas were designed, after all, with me in mind. This process creates an advantage in that the knowledge and the process of learning it are the teacher's personal repertoire and as such, have potential for transfer -- to other pupils, other classes, and other schools. Even though born within the context of one school, the knowledge is the teacher's professional property. School districts take advantage of it when they hire an experienced teacher who can quickly adapt to a new school.

I can talk to parents with confidence.
Mentee

The process allowed me to try and discover academic and classroom control ideas.
Mentee

What specific content does a new teacher need to get through the beginning of school, especially the first days and weeks? Each school differs, but Appendix E gives some guidance to new teachers on preparing for the opening of school. Some of the classroom *management items are typical of those addressed by mentor-mentee conversation.*

The college program probably cannot teach you the "people skills" needed for the job.
Mentee

A new teacher also needs to know what reactions may be expected from parents, pupils, faculty members, administrators, custodian, school secretary, and other significant persons in and around the school. This could be learned over time, sometimes smoothly and sometimes harshly. The mentor who supplies the beginner with timely information about the feelings, attitudes, sensitivities and emotions of key persons or groups of persons is providing an immense help. The motivations for new teachers to learn this personal information are several:

➊ **First, people learn to work with and around the feelings of others** as part of normal human discourse. New teachers are no different. They need to anticipate how others will react; context information about people is the necessary information. Being able to anticipate other teachers' reactions, particularly those in the same grades, may be a large factor in deciding what and how some lessons are taught.

I learned how to deal with trouble makers.
Mentee

➋ A **second** motivation involves the manner in which the instructional decisions will be received or how it may impact individuals or groups of persons. **A knowledge of student backgrounds and attitudes and that of their parents** is an important part of a teacher's learning. It becomes part of the information needed to assess a child's learning style.

Mentor should be neutral about the forces that exist in the community.
Mentor

➌ **Third, new teachers may have no idea of the issues about which a community may be sensitive.** Some subject content may be taught innocently enough, but may arouse emotional reactions and lead to controversy. The community reaction to the beginner may be less tolerant than it will be for a respected veteran teacher. To be forewarned is to be forearmed.

My mentor gave me reassurance that I was doing the right thing relative to my style.
Mentee

➍ **Finally**, an often overlooked context factor is the new teacher him/herself. The emotions that first year teaching creates will be masked over in many cases. But the beginner needs to recognize that his/her personal reactions may color the way that events and others are perceived. Is this an advantage to mentoring? It is when **the beginner is encouraged to reflect on him/herself as a factor in the school learning environment.**

As new teachers continue to gain experience, they begin to trust themselves and stop second guessing their decisions. What others think becomes less of a factor, and learning decisions are based on professional rather than personal considerations. The teachers are becoming "professionals."

I don't take things personally anymore.

Mentee

Other Mentoring Benefits

Context knowledge can be directly enhanced and accelerated by mentor assistance. There are additional benefits, some of which may be more obvious and measurable. Examples of these benefits are as follows:

Retention: One of the high points in a new teacher's year is to be offered the second contract. It signals he/she can do the job of teaching which comes as a great relief. The district also wants to retain its best teachers; keeping promising first year teachers is much easier than hiring new ones. But retention also has much wider implications. The teaching profession suffers from a high dropout rate. Most of this comes from teachers choosing to leave on their own. The primary reason is not money or students, but rather an inability to fulfill personal aspirations while working within the school context. They feel the need to satisfy the "system" conflicts with what they had personally hoped to obtain from a teaching career. It is arguable whether this inconsistently results from unrealistic expectations or from an inability to cope with actual school conditions. As a mentored beginning teacher, you have the advantage of being better able to function within school structural conditions because of timely information. Regardless of what the real dropout reasons may be, within one to three years from now, **there is a 91% chance you will still be teaching if your experience follows that of the Montana mentoring research. That is much better than the 73% for non-mentored beginners.** Within five to six years, half of all new teachers will no longer be teaching. The authors are confident that mentoring will help keep you in the profession.

High Points of the Year for Mentees:

Contract renewal!
Kids' accomplishments!
January evaluation after a long wait!
New curriculum plans!

Low Points of the Year for Mentees:

Family sucked into the routine!
Monotony of the routine hit me in February!
Department problems - extra curricular work - reluctant school board - all came together during February!

Feedback: First year teachers have a tendency to judge themselves more poorly than is actually the case. The reason is a lack of feedback from important adults in the school. The administrator conducts formal evaluations and classroom observations, but typically these come too late

The mentor and I roomed together. Talked until the wee small hours.

Mentee

and too infrequently to satisfy the beginner's need for feedback. To fill the vacuum, novices pick up signals about their performance from whatever sources are available -- students, teacher's lounge, hallways, downtown, and their own imagination. A spouse at home during the evening may not want to listen to school talk. Frequent and candid conversations with a mentor go a long way toward fulfilling this need.

Preparation for evaluations: Administrative teacher evaluations are the devices used by school districts to document performance, plan for growth, and make rehiring decisions. Mentors can help beginners prepare for earlier (formative) evaluations and final (summative) evaluations. The anxiety in the beginner's mind can be reduced by knowing what to expect during the administrative visit and afterwards. However, mentors do have to keep themselves clear of the actual evaluation.

I am very concerned that I won't get through all my objectives.

Mentee

Professional Development Plans: Many districts require teachers, especially new ones, to work with the administration in developing an individual professional development plan (IPDP). The teacher's self-assessment is a large factor in the plan. New teachers may wonder what goals are appropriate. Mentors can help.

The other 25%: The manual authors claim that 75% of potential mentoring benefit comes about through the interaction of mentor and mentee. As a first year teacher, you can start to realize the remaining benefit if you can get together with other beginning teachers and tell tales. Whether or not the other new teachers are mentored is not that important. You will discover and be relieved to learn that others like yourself have many problems and concerns in common with you. The sense of relief that comes from knowing you are not alone with the problems you face is in itself a significant boost to your professional esteem. The process is very therapeutic. As a mentored teacher, you have someone (mentor) who can help pull strings with your building administrator, and in turn with other officials in the district or in the region. Ask if they can help set up a social or professional meeting of first year teachers, or if not, perhaps supply the names of such teachers. Your mentor probably knows the representative of the state teachers' association or union who might be able to help with names.

A couple teachers like yourself could organize a meeting of new teachers. If you show initiative, you might be surprised at the help others might lend.

The Formalized Mentor-Mentee Relationship

Formalized responsibility: I was not making him go out of his way.
Mentee

The relationship between mentor and first-year teacher as envisioned by this manual is formalized both in its design and implementation. The implications of this formal arrangement are important to understand because they create a path of responsibility from the time mentoring is proposed until the time it is evaluated. Responsibility leads persons to create structures and procedures to carry out their obligations. The end purpose of all of this, of course, is to **create the supportive atmosphere within which the interaction between mentor and mentee takes place**. Chapter Two discusses the essential components of a mentoring program and where the responsibility falls for each step. In the following section of this chapter, the individual responsibilities of the three most active participants -- building administrator, mentor, and mentee -- are described. Written for mentee understanding, the descriptions help the beginner trace mentorship program responsibilities as they develop and impacts him/her within the school. A knowledge of the process should enable a mentee to become an active participant in the process instead of sitting back and waiting for things to happen.

Formalized - not left to chance.

Administrator Responsibilities: The Building Principal (in smaller districts, perhaps the Superintendent/Principal, County Superintendent, or Supervising Teacher) has the duty of creating a structure that supports the mentor-mentee pair at the school in which they work. This has to be an operation that actually assists the participants, not just words of encouragement. Some of the more important parts of a mentoring program that depend on the building administrator follow:

- **Making the pairing**: The principal will probably have the most say in selecting your mentor. In the Montana mentorship study, they made a good match 90% of the time. By the same token, if you and your mentor have personality conflicts that do not ease over time, the administrator will have to execute whatever disengagement is needed and reassign if appropriate.

- **Timing of the pairing**: You will probably be paired with a mentor before the school year starts and have a chance to be together before the pupils arrive. That is what experienced mentors and mentees recommend. But your district or administrator may decide to wait for a few days or weeks before matching. The advantage in waiting is to avoid an early mismatch.

A need: more time for mentor and mentee to meet.
Mentee

- **Formal time for talk**: Your administrator will work with you and the mentor to set up formal times that the two of you can talk. If you and your mentor are able to work out the times yourselves, the principal will need to agree. These talk opportunities need to be respected and not sacrificed to other pressures.

- **Monitoring the process**: It is unwise to assume mentoring will start and proceed on its own. The administrator will be checking with you and the mentor from time to time. If periodic meetings with the three of you can be scheduled, that structure would ensure monitoring.

- **Non-mentoring communication**: You may expect that your mentor will provide you with some of the information you would normally get from the administrator. Most officials have an open door policy; you can talk with the principal about issues whether associated with mentoring or not. Mentoring is, after all, a temporary thing and direct communication with the office will be the norm next year.

I felt it was my right to ask as a formal mentee.
Mentee

Mentor Responsibilities: It would take many pages to describe the possible assistance a mentor could give a new teacher. But it can be briefly summarized by referring again to the concept of formalized responsibility. Some of the ways mentees will see this responsibility exhibited include the following:

Went in to talk with my mentee. Was met with a burst of tears and "Am I in the right profession?"
Mentor

1. If there were anything mentors in the Montana study felt most acutely, it was **the sense of responsibility toward the beginning teacher mentee**. This sense was the product of the formal arrangements structured into the program, the reward system, and the interaction that

ensued between the pair. As a mentee, the implication of this arrangement is direct and of tremendous advantage. You do not need to worry about imposing on the mentor's time. He/she expects it and feels obligated to give you whatever time you need. Mentors feel they are rendering a real service, not only to you, but to the teaching profession. They take the obligation very seriously, and their time with you is part of it.

2. **Mentors are chosen for their knowledge and experience.** Mentees capitalize on this by receiving timely information about the school, instead of having to learn it by experience. As was noted earlier, experience is a good teacher, but it can be indiscriminate and not very efficient. Administrators noted that, when compared to non-mentored teacher expectations, mentees progressed faster in their development. They also credited mentors when beginners were better able to learn a school's operating procedures.

I asked my mentor, "What do we do with divorced parents in the upcoming parent conferences?"
Mentee

3. **Credibility and leverage are two "powers" that mentors possess with the school faculty and staff.** As a beginning teacher in the school unfamiliar with the internal politics, you may not recognize the mentor using his/her power for your benefit. But mentors tend to be somewhat protective of their newcomers and there are apt to be instances where other staff members did not take advantage of you because of your association with that person. When the year is done, the respect that you have earned will take over.

Some practices to avoid at the local level:
- *Exploit the uninformed*
- *Give newcomers dregs*
- *Young whippersnapper attitude*
- *Divisive school politics*
- *No-win situations*
- *No insulation from critics for beginner*

Mentors and Mentees

4. **Mentors will be able to get you started with the right information at the right time.** New teachers usually do not know what questions to even start asking, so mentors are able to volunteer information in a prioritized manner that will be available to you at the appropriate time. This is part of their responsibility to personalize the information for your specific needs, rather than overwhelming you with too much.

5. **Mentors can teach you how to say "no."** As a beginner, you want to appear cooperative, but too many extras can bleed off all your free time and take away much of your energy. Around the school, people, by intent or by innocence, may take advantage of the naive newcomer. Clues from a mentor can be very valuable.

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Mentee Responsibilities: As the recipient of mentor assistance, you have obligations to the program and to the people who have contributed on your behalf. With the information contained in this chapter, you have some idea of what those efforts are. Here are some mentee responsibilities that can help you start to take command of you own professional growth:

You need to have the same philosophy -- answer questions but not tell you what to do.
Mentee

- ***Show initiative and enthusiasm!*** *The above discussion of context knowledge -- you want to know how people are going to react to you and your ideas -- may very well be a function of how you react to them. People will feel rewarded working with you if they can read into your actions and words a sense of excitement, appreciation, get-up-and-go, and the other signs of someone who is really "with the program."*

- *Just as your mentor has a responsibility to make time for communication, you need to do your part by honoring that time or letting the mentor know when you cannot. Some* ***mentors may not know how to break the conversational ice with you.*** *If you sense this happening, take the lead. Write down a list of things you want to ask if you cannot easily bring up issues. Bring the list with you to the conversation.*

Mutual reliance on each other for ideas.
Mentee

- *As a new teacher,* ***you represent a source of new ideas*** *that can potentially benefit the school. Share them with your mentor and the other teachers when the time is right. Mentors want to grow themselves, and you may be just the transfusion they need. Much of the communication that takes place between you may evolve into an exchange of ideas.*

- *Finally,* ***be a teacher of whom the school can be proud!*** *No amount of mentoring can make up for a lack of personal and professional judgment. It is part of that character/package you bring to the community and to the school. As a new teacher, your moral, legal, and ethical behavior in and out of school is going to be under scrutiny by the community. Teachers are held to a higher standard than most other citizens in the way they dress around school, the language they use, and other features that denote good role models for children. Because townspeople can be fickle in their attitudes, don't be afraid to ask your mentor or administrator if in doubt about visiting one of the local saloons, living out of town, buying locally, etc.* ***If you aspire to become a respected professional educator, your actions and motives need to be unquestioned.***

I was left alone to deal with a major censorship issue -- but I emerged stronger for it.
Mentee

APPENDICES

Appendix A . . . . References

Appendix B . . . . Other Handbooks, Guides, and Reports

Appendix C . . . . Administrative Sample Letters

Appendix D . . . . Reflective Questioning

Appendix E . . . . Checklist for Starting School Year

Appendix F . . . . Participants in Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program by Year and District

Appendix G . . . . Steering Committee for The Single Best Thing

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OTHER HANDBOOKS, GUIDES, AND REPORTS

This section provides a listing and brief description of a number of handbooks, guides and reports that are available to assist in the development and implementation of a beginning teacher mentoring program or to broaden an induction program.

Authors: Dr. Lee Spuhler, Project Administrator
Dr. Alan Zetler, Project Evaluator
Title: ***Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program: Final Report***
Publisher/ Institution: Board of Public Education, Certification Standards and Practices Advisory Council, 2500 Broadway, P.O. Box 200601, Helena, MT 59620-0601, Phone: (406) 444-6576.
Date: 1995
Abstract: The purpose of the report is to provide a description of a three-year research project on the effect of mentoring and school/community influence on a new teacher's development. The research shows the positive effect that mentoring can have in easing the transition from college to teaching.

Authors: Dr. Barbara Levandowsk
Dr. Georgiann McKenna
Title: ***Teacher Induction Program Handbook***
Publisher/ Institution: Woodstock Community Unit, School District 200, Woodstock, IL 60098
Date: 1995-96
Abstract: The handbook is designed as a guide for the operation of the District 200 Teacher Induction Program. It includes the program philosophy, goals and components as well as the roles and responsibilities of the administrators, mentors, and beginning teachers.

Author: Karen D. Olsen
Title: ***The Mentor Teacher Role: Owners Manual - Fifth Edition***
Publisher/ Institution: Books for Educators, P.O. Box 20525, Village of Oak Creek, AZ 86341, Phone: (602)284-2389.
Date: 1989
Abstract: This manual, written for mentor teachers and administrators, traces the implementation of the California Mentor Teacher Program. Its purpose is to explore the potential of mentoring, to identify roles and tasks necessary to ensure a successful mentoring program and to examine future directions.

Author: Victoria C. Bernhardt, Ph.D.
Title: ***Paving the Road to Excellence: Inducting New Teachers into the Profession - A Guide for Administrators***
Publisher/ Institution: Institute for Advanced Studies in Education, College of Education, California State University - Chico, Chico, CA 95929-0224, Phone: (916) 895-6165.
Date: 1989
Abstract: The guide is designed primarily for the school administrator to assist in the development and implementation of an induction program for new teachers into the profession.

Authors: Mr. Thom Brzoska
Dr. Jan Jones
Dr. John Mahaffy
Dr. J. Kenneth Miller
Ms. Joann Mychais
Title: ***Mentor Teacher Handbook***
Publisher/ Institution: Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Marketing Office, 101 S.W. Main Street, Portland, OR 97204, Phone: (503) 275-9500
Date: 1987
Abstract: The handbook is intended as a reference to the various skills and knowledge areas required for becoming a successful mentor. It can be used as a resource to stimulate mentor/mentee teams to create a mutually beneficial and rewarding relationship.

Authors: Staff - Tennessee Education Association and Appalachia Educational Laboratory
Title: ***Bridges to Strength: Establishing a Mentoring Program for Beginning Teacher, An Administrator's Guide***
Publisher/ Institution: Appalachia Educational Laboratory, P.O. Box 1348, Charleston, WV 25325, Phone: (800) 624-9120.
Date: 1988
Abstract: The guide offers assistance to administrators in planning and implementation of a mentoring program by: 1) outlining essential components; 2) listing participants' responsibility; 3) describing mentor compensation; 4) describing a selection process; 5) presenting areas of training for mentors; 6) specifying work of administrators.

Author: William S. Emrick
Title: ***Mentoring Handbook***
Publisher/ Office of Human Resources, Ferguson-Florissant School District,
Institution: Florissant, MO 63031
Date: 1988
Abstract: This handbook focuses on the development of a mentor program at the Ferguson-Florissant School District in Missouri. The program is described under these topics: 1) program goals; 2) mentor selection criteria; 3) mentor teacher's tasks and duties; 4) definition of new teacher; 5) new teacher training; 6) program administration; 7) program evaluation; 8) mentor functions; 9) mentor teacher qualities; 10) mentor behavior; and 11) beneficial aspects. It incldues a list of what mentors can do and sample professional development plans for a beginning teacher.

ADMINISTRATIVE SAMPLE LETTERS

Dear ____________:

Our school district is considering the establishment of a mentoring program for the next school year. You are invited to be a member of a steering committee to study the feasibility of a formal program to provide the assistance of an experienced teacher to help a beginning teacher achieve professional success. If the program is implemented, this committee will also be responsible for evaluating the program at the end of the first year.

The committee will provide its recommendations by the end of the first week in April. Please contact my office by March 3 if you wish to participate in this most important endeavor.

Sincerely,

Dear ________:

Thank you for agreeing to serve on the mentor steering committee. The charge for the committee will be the following:

1. District rationale for mentoring
    a. Definition of professional growth
    b. Possible positive aspects of a program
    c. Possible negative aspects of a program
    d. Recommendation to establish a program or not

If the committee decides to establish a program, the mentors will then consider the following:

2. Scope of operation
    a. Size of the program (all new teachers or selected)
    b. Duration of assistance (1/2 year, 1 year, 2 years)
    c. Special unique school and community environment factors
    d. Released time for mentor/mentee conversations
    e. Reward and recognition for mentors
    f. Time for mentor/mentee pairings (August - September)
    g. Budget implications
    h. Disengagement options
    i. Program goals (first year)

The organizational meeting will be next Tuesday at noon. The committee will be required to complete its deliberations by the end of the first week in April.

Sincerely,

MEMO

TO: Teaching Staff
FROM: Principal
RE: Mentoring Program

For the next school year we are planning to establish a mentoring program. What is Mentoring? "Mentoring is a formal helping relationship by which an experienced educator assists a beginning teacher achieve professional success. A fundamental tenet of teacher mentoring is the belief that the single best way of developing and retaining entry level teachers is to utilize the assistance of an established classroom teacher during the first year of the beginner's induction."

At this time we need to ascertain how many teachers would be interested in being considered as potential mentors. From this identified pool of potential participants, mentors will be selected to be paired up with next year's beginning teachers according to room proximity, grade level, subjects taught, etc.

Please contact the office by May 1 if you wish to be considered as a potential mentor.

Appendix C - Sample Letter #4

Dear ____________:

Congratulations upon being selected to participate in our newly established mentor program for the coming school year. The pairings for our school follow:

Mentors	Mentees
Name - grade/subject	Name - grade/subject
Name - grade/subject	Name - grade/subject
Name - grade/subject	Name - grade/subject

I plan to meet with the paired teams on August 20 and 21, starting at 9:00 a.m. This is several days prior to our regular pre-school meetings. During this time we will discuss the details of the program and our roles and responsibilities. Please contact me if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

MEMO

TO: Steering Committee Members
Mentor/Mentee Teams
Building Administrators
FROM: Program Administrators
RE: Mentor Program Evaluation

There will be a meeting on Monday, May 5 at 3:30 p.m. to review the mentor program over the past year. The first objective of this meeting is to measure the attainment of the goals originally identified in the Rationale for Mentoring and the Scope of Operation. The second objective is to recommend the program direction for the next year.

General Questions to Facilitate Reflective Thinking

The following are suggested questions the mentor may use when talking with the mentee to promote reflective thinking. The questions have the ability to take the mentors out of the judgment process and places it in the hands of the mentees.

- Describe what was going on today.
- What was the purpose of the lesson?
- In what ways was the learning appropriate for these learners?
- How do you think the lesson went?
- Did the learners achieve the learning?
- On what did you base your decisions?
- Can you recall what the students were doing that made you feel that way?
- Did anything happen in the class that surprised you?
- How does this compare with what you hoped/expected would happen?
- What did you learn from today's events?
- What seemed "right" to you today about what took place?
- What are some issues or concerns you would like to explore?
- What did you notice about the students?
- What could be some of the reasons this happened this way?
- If you imagined a replay, what would it look like?

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Questions Promoting Reflection

- What pleased you most about this lesson?
- Can you talk more about that?
- Why do you think that happened?
- What evidence do you have for that?
- What do you need?
- Has anything like this happened before?
- Help me to understand...
- What has worked for you in the past?
- What have you tried so far?
- Why did/didn't it work?
- What did you take into account in planning this?
- What did you expect would happen?
- What do you want to happen?
- What conclusions can you draw?
- What does this remind you of?
- What if it happened this way?
- If you could replay the class, would you make any changes?
- How else could you approach that?
- How could you do that?
- When is the concern most pronounced?
- May I offer a resource?
- May I share an experience?

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Check List

Preparing for the First Day

Efficiency in the classroom is the hallmark of an effective learning environment. Established procedures, consistently applied and taught to your students at the onset of the school year, will significantly improve your classroom management time.

Directions:

- Check ( ) each item for which you already have a prepared process.
- Place an (**X**) by any item for which you do not have a policy but believe you need one.
- Highlight those items which you will teach the students the first day of class.

I. Beginning Class
___ A. Roll Call, Absent, Tardy
___ B. Academic Warm-Ups
___ C. Distributing Materials
___ D. Class Opening
II. Room/School Areas
___ A. Shared Materials
___ B. Teacher's Desk
___ C. Drinks, Bathroom, Pencil Sharpener
___ D. Student Storage/Lockers
___ E. Student Desks
___ F. Learning Centers, Stations
___ G. Playground, Schoolgrounds
___ H. Lunchroom
___ I. Halls
III. Setting up Independent Work
___ A. Defining "Working Alone"
___ B. Identifying Problems
___ C. Identifying Resources
___ D. Identifying Solutions
___ E. Scheduling
___ F. Interim Checkpoints
IV. Instructional Activities
___ A. Teacher, Student Contacts
___ B. Student Movement in the Room
___ C. Signals for Students' Attention
___ D. Signals for Teacher's Attention
___ E. Student Talk During Seatwork
___ F. Activities to Do When Work Is Done
___ G. Student Participation
___ H. Laboratory Procedures
___ I. Movement In and Out of Small Groups
___ J. Bringing Materials to School
___ K. Expected Behavior in Group
___ L. Behavior of Students Not in Group
V. Ending Class
___ A. Putting Away Supplies, Equipment
___ B. Cleaning Up
___ C. Organizing Class Materials
___ D. Dismissing Class
VI. Interruptions
___ A. Rules
___ B. Talk among Students
___ C. Conduct

___ D. Passing Out Books, Supplies
___ E. Turning in Work
___ F. Handing Back Assignments
___ G. Getting Back Assignments
___ H. Out-of-Seat Policies
___ I. Consequences for Misbehavior

VII. Other Procedures
___ A. Fire Drills
___ B. Lunch Procedures
___ C. Student Helpers
___ D. Safety Procedures

VIII. Work Requirements
___ A. Heading Papers
___ B. Use of Pen or Pencil
___ C. Writing on Back of Paper
___ D. Neatness, Legibility
___ E. Incomplete Work
___ F. Late Work
___ G. Missed Work
___ H. Due Dates
___ I. Make-up Work
___ J. Supplies
___ K. Coloring or Drawing on Paper
___ L. Use of Manuscript or Cursive (Elem)

IX. Communicating Assignments
___ A. Posting Assignments
___ B. Orally Giving Assignments
___ C. Provision for Absentees
___ D. Long-term Assignments
___ E. Term Schedule
___ F. Homework Assignments

X. Student Work
___ A. In-class Participation
___ B. In-class Assignments
___ C. Homework
___ D. Stages of Long-term Assignments

XI. Checking Assignments in Class
___ A. Students Exchanging Papers
___ B. Marking and Grading Assignments
___ C. Turning in Assignments
___ D. Students Correcting Errors

XII. Grading Procedures
___ A. Determining Grades
___ B. Recording Grades
___ C. Grading Long Assignments
___ D. Extra Credit Work
___ E. Keeping Papers, Grades, Assignments
___ F. Grading Criteria
___ G. Contracting for Grades

XIII. Academic Feedback
___ A. Rewards and Incentives
___ B. Posting Student Work
___ C. Communicating with Parents
___ D. Students' Record of Grades
___ E. Written Comments on Assignments

Reprinted by permission from Mentor Handbook, Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory, Portland, Oregon, 1987.

Participants by Year and District in the Montana Beginning Teacher Support Program Study

The following is a list of the schools, mentors, mentees, and administrators that participated in the three-year Beginning Teacher Support Program study. Some of the participants are now teaching in different schools and some of the names have changed due to marriage.

1992-1993				
School	**Location**	**Mentor**	**Mentee**	**Administrator**
Reichle Elem.	Glen	Linda Hicks	Channon Williams	Linda Hicks, S.T.
Whitehall H.S.	Whitehall	Pat Severance	Darcy Accord	Jim McCrossin, Prin.
Belgrade Elem.	Belgrade	Ellie Rothing	Kris Menicucci	Jan Riebhoff, Prin.
*Twin Bridges Elem.	Twin Bridges	Verta Ann Dorseth	Toni Day	Doug Denson, Prin.
Park City H.S.	Park City	Karen Madsen	Jori Flom	Terry Laughery, Prin.
Billings Elem.	Billings	Ed Harris	Julie Carlson	Sandy Mossman, C.D.
Hobson H.S.	Hobson	Jerry Feller	William Petzke	Dennis Fry, Supt.
Morningside Elem.	Great Falls	William Salonen	Susan Scotson	Diane Farmer, Prin.
Vaughn Elem.	Vaughn	Hallie Olson	Brenda Shirley	Frank McGowan; Supt.
K.W. Bergan Elem.	Browning	Barbara Gallup	Valerie After Buffalo	June Tatsey, Prin.
St. Ignatius Elem.	St. Ignatius	Lorraine McNamer	Dan Durglo	David Werdin, Prin.

S.T. = Supervising Teacher   Prin. = Principal   Supt. = Superintendent   C.D. = Curriculum Director

* Toni Day was a special education teacher and it was arranged that she would have two mentors, Verta Ann Dorseth, elementary teacher in Twin Bridges, and Donna Waylett, special education teacher in Dillon.

1993-1994				
School	**Location**	**Mentor**	**Mentee**	**Administrator**
Emily Dickinson	Bozeman	Toby Rieder	John Usher	Dean Mikkelson, Prin.
Rapelje H.S.	Rapelje	Wayne Erfle	Joe Schladweiler	Gary Scott, Supt.
Joliet H.S.	Joliet	Vance Blatter	Kevin Brooke	Leo Lorenz, Supt.
Shepherd J.H.	Shepherd	Gail White	Jeannie McIssac	Gary Degouyer, Prin.
Custer Co. H.S.	Miles City	Linda Coates	Carmen Ferguson	Fred Anderson, Prin.
Lewistown Elem.	Lewistown	Lynne Wise	Melanie Rapp	Sid Wilson, Prin.
Roy Elem.	Roy	Betty Maruska	Dusty Sturm	George Bewick, Supt.
Saco H.S.	Saco	Beth Nagle	Lorie Martinez	Larry Crowder, Prin.
Malta H.S.	Malta	Steve Schumacher	Loyd Rennaker	Kelly Taylor, Prin.
Harlem H.S.	Harlem	Cindy Heppner	Debbie Jo Holman	Jim Owen, Prin.
Havre M.S.	Havre	Shirley Johnsrud	Lorna Stremcha	Jeff Pratt, Prin.
Knees Elem.	Chouteau Co.	Margie Schuler	Robyn Jones	Larry Stollfuss, Supt.

S.T. = Supervising Teacher   Prin. = Principal   Supt. = Superintendent   C.D. = Curriculum Director

Appendix F - Participants in the 3 Year Beginning Teacher Support Program Study

1994-1995				
School	**Location**	**Mentor**	**Mentee**	**Administrator**
Columbia Fls. Elem.	Columbia Falls	Suzanne Seaman	Kathy Martin	Trent Miller, Coor.
Corvallis H.S.	Corvallis	Dale Campbell	Russ Hendrickson	Susan Schumacher, Prin.
Drummond H.S.	Drummond	Don Anderson	Lindsay Jones	Walt Piippo, Supt.
Flathead H.S.	Kalispell	David Hashley	Greg Adkins	Cathy McDevitt, Prin.
Florence-Carlton	Florence	Gary Janego	Julie Hanser	Vance Ventresca, Prin.
Helena H.S.	Helena	Doug Shenkle	Josh McKay	Ken Price, Asst. Prin.
Hellgate Elem.	Missoula	Carol Shaffner	Marsha Hamilton	Candace Johnson, Prin.
Bissell Elem.	Whitefish	Terri Morris	Sandra Ausenhus	Ronald Kuehne, Prin.
Polson H.S.	Polson	Bob Gunderson	Marlin Lewis	Ed Longin, Prin.
K. William Harvey	Ronan	Denise DesJarlais	Tammy Krahn	Gary Gottfried, Prin.
Victor H.S.	Victor	Mark Andrews	Dennis Pings	Lucy Braach, Supt.
L.A. Muldown Elem.	Whitefish	Ann Audet	Darren Schlepp	Bobbi Barrett, Prin.

S.T. = Supervising Teacher Prin. = Principal Supt. = Superintendent C.D. = Curriculum Director

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- Toby Rieder
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Hellgate Elementary School, District No. 4
- Candy Johnson, Principal
- Carol Shaffner
- Marsha Hamilton

1,000 copies of this public document were published at an estimated cost of $2.75 per copy, for a total cost of $2,750.00, which includes $2,750.00 for printing and $.00 for distribution.